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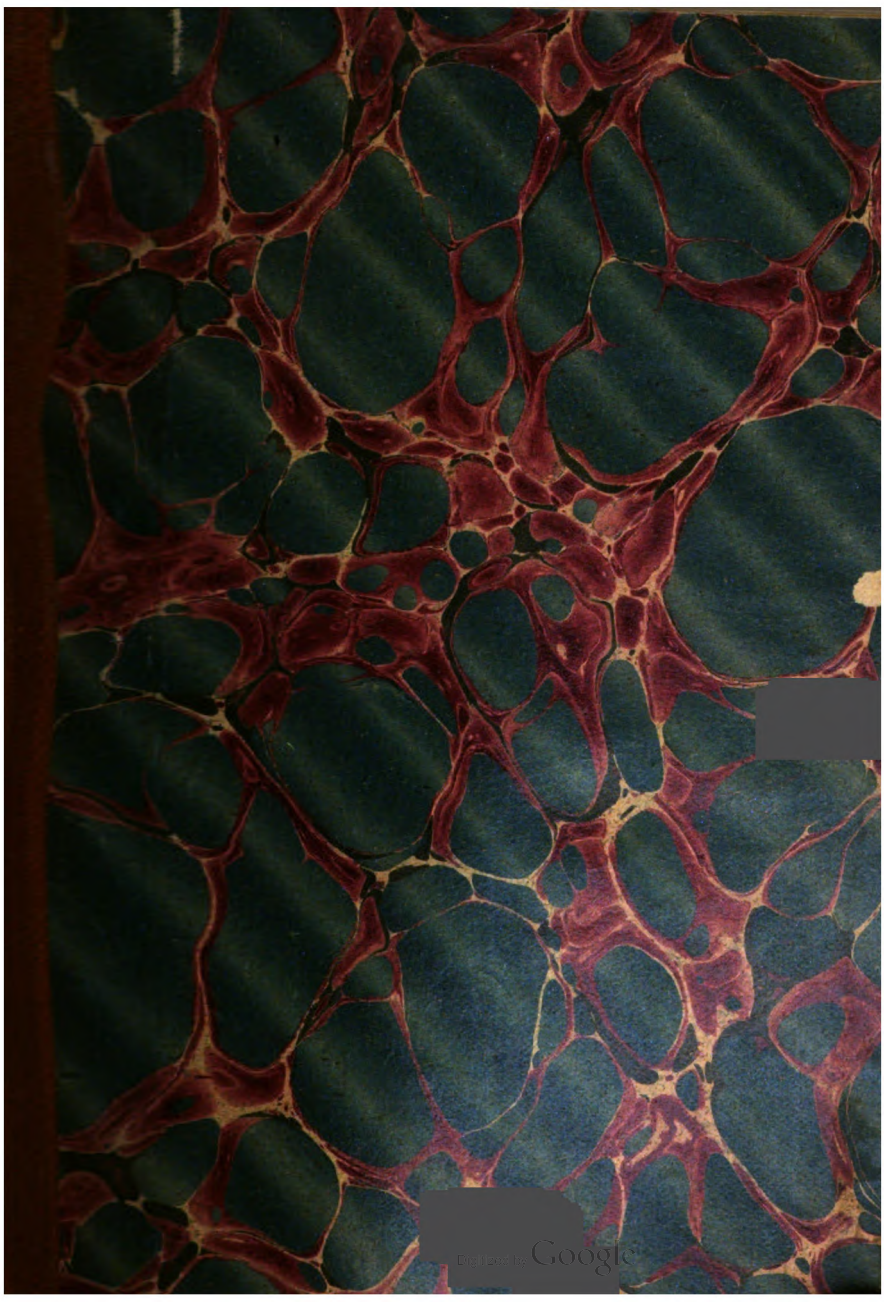


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GOD THE TEACHER

OF

MANKIND:

A PLAIN, COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN
DOCTRINE.

III

THE GREATEST and the FIRST COMMANDMENT.

BY

MICHAEL MÜLLER



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THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

MANY centuries ago, there lived in the far Orient, in Asia, a great king named Solomon. In his search for happiness, he sought to gratify every desire of his heart. "I said in my heart: I will go, and abound with delights and enjoy good things. I made me great works, I built me houses, and planted vineyards. I made gardens, and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds, and I made me ponds of water, to water therewith the wood of the young trees. I got me men-servants, and maid-servants, and had a great family; and herds of oxen, and great flocks of sheep, above all that were before me in Jerusalem: I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces: I sought out singing men, and singing women, and the delights of the sons of men: cups and vessels for wine: and I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem: my wisdom also remained with me. And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared: and esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labor."

After so ample an enjoyment of all earthly pleasures, may we not think that this king was happy indeed? Nevertheless, he tells us that his heart was not satisfied. "And when I turned myself," he says, "to all the works

which my hands had wrought, and to the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things *vanity*, and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun." (Eccles. ii.)

What happened to Solomon happens still to every man on earth. Well has the poet written :

" Oh ! what is all earth's round,
Brief scene of man's proud strife and vain endeavor,
Weighed with that deep profound, that tideless ocean river,
That onward bears time's fleeting forms for ever ! "

Give to that man whose dream, whose waking thought, day and night, is to grow rich ; to live in splendor and luxury ; whose life is spent in planning, and thinking, and toiling—give him all the kingdoms of the earth, all the gold of the mountains, all the pearls of the ocean : give him the desire of his heart, will he be happy ? Will his heart be at rest ? Ah ! no. He will find that riches are like thorns ; they only wound and burn. They seem sweet when beheld at a distance ; but indulge in them, and at once you taste their bitterness.

Dim twilight broods o'er land and sea,
The birds have hushed their melody :
I sadly gaze on yon bright star —
My soul's true home is far, so far !

My restless heart's a stranger here !
Where e'er I wander far or near
I seek in vain for joy and peace,
My homesick soul longs for release.

Earth's sweetest joys last but a while,
Dark tears soon quench the brightest smile.
The sparkling eye is dimmed by death,
And beauty pales at his chill breath !

Earth's pleasures tempt but to defile,
Earth's beauty lures but to beguile;
Wealth, like the thorn, with stinging smart,
Can only burn and wound the heart!

Where have the joys of childhood gone?
Where have youth's golden visions flown?
Where shall my yearning hopes be blest?
Where shall my weary heart find rest?

The stream e'er seeks the sounding sea,
The flow'ret lures the honey-bee,
The wild bird flies to its fond nest—
In heaven alone my soul can rest!

All the goods and pleasures of this world are like the fisher's baited hook. The fish eagerly swallows the bait, it sees not the hook; but no sooner does the fisherman draw up his line than it is tormented and soon after comes to destruction. So it is with all those who esteem themselves happy in their temporal possessions. In their comforts and honors they have swallowed a hook. The time will come when they shall feel the cruel hook which they have swallowed in their greediness.

Now, why is it that the riches and pleasures of this world cannot make us happy? It is because the soul was not created by them and for them, but by God and for God. The enjoyment of God alone can make the soul happy.

A thing is made better only by that which is better than itself. Inferior beings can never make superior beings better. The soul, being immortal, is superior to all earthly things. Earthly things, then, cannot make the soul better. Hence it is that here on earth we are never satisfied. We always crave for something more, something higher, something better. Whence comes this continual restlessness that haunts us through life and pursues us even

to the grave? It is the home-sickness of the soul; its craving after a Good that is better and more excellent than the soul herself is. God alone is this Good, He is Supreme Goodness itself. He who possesses God, possesses the goodness of all other things; for whatever goodness they possess they have from God.

Where, then, are we to seek true happiness? In God alone. God has certainly reserved to himself far more beauty and goodness than he has bestowed upon his creatures. This truth admitted, it necessarily follows that he who enjoys God possesses, in him, all things; and consequently, the very same delight that he would have taken in other things, had he enjoyed them separately, he enjoys in God, in a far-greater measure and in a more elevated manner. For this reason, St. Francis of Assisi used to exclaim, "My God and my All"—a saying to which he was so accustomed that he could scarcely think of any thing else, and often spent whole nights in meditating on this truth. So also St. Teresa would exclaim, "God alone is sufficient!"

True contentment is found in the Creator, and not in the creature. It is a contentment which no man can take from the soul, and in comparison with which all other joy is sadness, all pleasure sorrow, all sweetness bitter, all beauty ugliness, all delight affliction. It is most certain that when "face to face, we shall see God as He is," we shall have perfect joy and happiness. The more closely, then, we are united with God in this life, the greater contentment of mind and the greater happiness of soul shall we enjoy; and this contentment and joy are of the self-same nature as that which we shall have in heaven. The only difference consists in this: that here our happi-

ness is in an incipient state, whilst in heaven it will be brought to perfection. The very essence of all happiness consists in being intimately united with God. Hence it is that St. Augustine, who had tasted all pleasures, exclaimed: "Thou hast made me, O God! for Thyself; and my heart was uneasy within me until it found its rest in Thee!"

Tell me why forever flowing
 Hastes the streamlet to the sea;
 Tell me why forever blowing
 Speeds the wind o'er hill and lea.
 Why the stream fore'er doth flow,
 Why the wind fore'er doth blow—
 This deep secret I would know.

Tell me why the stars e'er wander
 Through the darkling waste of space;
 Why the bright sun and the pale moon
 Restless march from place to place;
 Why they wander to and fro;
 Tell me for I long to know—
 This deep secret I would know.

Tell me why the winds are moaning
 Like a banished soul in pain;
 Why the waves are ever sobbing
 On the restless stormy main;
 Why the ocean's bosom heaves,
 Like one who though sleeping grieves
 O'er the loved and lost he leaves!

Tell me why the birds are flying
 Far away from their fond nest,
 Why the roses bright are dying,
 And the dear ones we love best—
 They whose love our life hath blessed—
 Why can they not with us rest?
 Why can they not with us rest?

Why is my sad heart so restless ?
 Why still longs my soul for bliss ?
 Why are all earth's honied pleasures
 Like the Judas traitor kiss ?
 Riches bring but care and pain,
 Beauty blooms to fade again,
 Nought that's fair can here remain !

Restless heart so sad and weary,
 Wouldst thou then the secret know ?
 All thou seest above, beneath thee,
 Stars that shine and streams that flow—
*All things yearn and seek for rest ;
 And thy soul shall ne'er be blest
 Till with God in heav'n thou rest !*

Now, when is it that we possess God, are closely united with him, and find our rest in him ? It is only when we do his holy will.

This God has given us clearly to understand in the words he addressed to Adam : " And of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." (Gen. ii., 17.)

By this commandment man was clearly given to understand that the continuation of his happiness, for time and eternity, depended upon his obedience to the will of God. To be free from irregular affections and disorderly passions, and to transmit his happiness to his posterity, was entirely in man's power. If he made a right use of his liberty by always following the law of God, if he preserved unsullied the image and likeness of his Creator and heavenly Father, if, in fine, he made a proper use of the creatures confided to his care, he was to receive the crown of life everlasting as reward for his fidelity. But if he swerved even for a moment, from this loving will of God, he was

to subject himself to the law of God's justice, who would not fail to execute the threatened punishment.

But did God, perhaps, afterwards, when man was redeemed, lay down other and easier conditions for his happiness and salvation? No; God did not change these conditions in the least. Man's happiness still depends on his obedience to the divine will. "Now if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and keep all His commandments, the Lord thy God will make thee higher than all the nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come unto thee and overtake thee: yet so if thou hear His precepts." (Deut. xxviii., 1, 2.) And our divine Saviour says: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you." (John xv., 15.) And again: "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii., 21.) Our Lord himself gave the example of obedience to the divine will, since he was obedient even unto the death of the cross. He thereby taught all men that their happiness and salvation depend on their unswerving obedience to the will of their heavenly Father. All men without exception were made by God to be happy with him for ever in heaven; but only on this condition: "He that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Now the will of God is expressed in his commandments and in the precepts of his Church. Hence the answer to the question—

1. Will faith alone save us ?

No ; Christ says : " If thou wilt enter life, keep the commandments." (Matt. xix., 17.) " Therefore, Faith without works is dead." (James ii., 26.)

To be saved it is not enough to believe that there is a God, who is the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, the judge of the living and the dead, the just rewarder of the good and punisher of the wicked ; it is not enough to believe that the Son of God became man and died for us on the cross ; that he founded the Roman Catholic Church, that it might, in his name and by his authority, teach all nations what they must believe in order to be saved ; in a word, it is not enough that our understanding be united to God by faith. We must also be united to him by the affections of our heart and will ; that is, we must really love God and show this love by keeping faithfully all his commandments. " Though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains," says St. Paul, " and have not charity, I am nothing." (1. Cor. xiii., 2.) " What will it profit, my brethren," says the Apostle St. James, " if a man says he hath faith, but no works ? Shall faith be able to save him ?" (Ch. ii., 14.) " Every tree that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii., 10.)

From these passages of Holy Writ it is evident that good works are required, that the keeping of the commandments is necessary, and that faith alone will not save us. Indeed, a Christian, without good works, is like a tree without fruit, a field without produce, a lamp without oil. His faith is barren and this barrenness is a kind of iniquity which renders a Christian very culpable. The fig-tree, which produced no fruit, was cursed. The talent was

taken from him who had hidden it in the earth. Those who do not practise what they believe will soon cease to believe. Faith does not long exist in the soul when the fruitful life of charity is destroyed. Those who believe and do not practise what they believe, will be more severely punished than those who are ignorant of the true faith.

Our delight and occupation in this world, then, should be to do the holy will of God. It was for his obedience to the will of God that Abel obtained from the Lord the testimony that he was just. It was for his obedience that Enoch was translated by God. On account of his obedience to the will of God, Noe with his family was saved from the deluge. It was for his obedience that Abraham became the father of many nations. It was for his obedience that Joseph was raised to the highest dignity at the court of Pharaoh. It was on account of his obedience that Moses was chosen to be the great prophet and law-giver of the people of God. As long as the Jews were obedient to the law of God, they were protected against all their enemies as by an impregnable rampart. Obedience to the will of God changed Saul from a persecutor of the Church into the Apostle of the Gentiles. The martyrs merited their glorious crown, not so much because they shed their blood, but because they died in obedience to the holy will of God. In fine, Jesus Christ has declared: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matt. xii., 50.)

He who leads a life contrary to God's will, is altogether out of place. A tool which is useless is cast away. A wheel which hinders other wheels from working is taken out and replaced by another. A limb which is out of

joint and endangers the health of the other members of the body is cut off. A servant who does no longer his master's will is discharged. A rebellious citizen who violates the laws of the state is put into prison or banished. A child who is stubbornly and sinfully disobedient to his parents, is disinherited.

Thus men naturally hate and reject whatever is unreasonable, or useless, or destructive of good order. What wonder, then, that the Lord of heaven and earth, the author of good sense and good order, should bear an implacable hatred towards those who disobey his holy will? He who lives in opposition to God's will suffers as many pangs as a limb which has been dislocated. He is continually tormented by evil spirits, who have power over a soul that is in enmity with God. He is no longer under the special protection of God, since he has voluntarily withdrawn from his holy will. God sent Jonas, the prophet, to Nineve, but the prophet, instead of going there, set out for Tarsus. What was the consequence? The disobedient prophet was buffeted by the tempest, cast into the sea, and swallowed by a monster of the deep. Behold the just punishment of all those who abandon God's will to follow their own passions and evil inclinations. They will be tossed like Jonas, by continual tempests. They will remain asleep in their sins, heedless of their danger, until they, finally, perish in the stormy sea, and are swallowed up in the abyss of hell! "Know thou and see that it is a bitter and fearful thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God, when he desired to lead thee in the way of salvation, saith the Lord God of hosts." (Jeremiah ii., 19.)

God grants to the devil great power over the disobedient.

As in Juda the Lord permitted a lion to kill a prophet in punishment for his disobedience, so he permits the infernal lion to assail the proud and the disobedient with the most filthy temptations; and as they are too weak to resist, they easily fall a prey to the rage of the hellish monster.

Disobedience to God's will was the cause that the rebellious angels were cast out of heaven, and our first parents expelled from paradise; it made Cain a vagabond on the face of the earth; it was the cause that the human race was drowned in the waters of the deluge; it brought destruction upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Disobedience to the will of God was the cause that the Jews were often led into captivity; it was the cause that Pharaoh and all his host were drowned in the Red Sea. Disobedience turned Nabuchodonosor into a wild beast; it laid the city of Jerusalem in ashes; it has ruined, and will still ruin nations, empires, and kingdoms; it will finally put an end to the world, when all those who have obstinately rebelled against the will of God, will be hurled into the everlasting flames of hell by the irresistible words of the Almighty: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels," there to obey the laws of God's justice for ever.

2. Which is the greatest commandment of God?

The greatest commandment is, to love God above all things, with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

We read in the Gospel that the Jews often put questions to our dear Saviour. Some questioned him through malice, to tempt and to ensnare him in his speech; others questioned him through curiosity; and others through a

sincere desire to know what they must believe and do, in order to be saved. Jesus answered all of them with admirable sweetness and charity. Thus one day, the Pharisees came to him, and one of them, a doctor of the law, tempted him, saying: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. xxii., 35.)

Our Lord gave this answer, because he knew that there were many who observed the commandments only externally, without loving God above all things.

Even the great Apostle St. Paul acknowledges that, though before his conversion he observed the law externally, without blame (Phil. iii., 6.), yet he did not observe it internally, by loving God above all things. "We ourselves," he says, "were some time unwise, incredulous, erring slaves to divers desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hating one another." (Tit. iii., 3.) Indeed a person may not curse or break the Sabbath, or disobey lawful authority, or commit adultery or steal, thus keeping the second, third, fourth, sixth and seventh commandments, and yet, for all that, he may not observe the precept of loving God above all things. "All these things," said the young man in the Gospel, "I have observed from my youth." But when he was told to leave his wealth and follow Jesus, he refused, and, therefore, our Lord silently reprov'd him by saying: "How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark x., 23.)

One, therefore, may keep the commandments externally without keeping them internally. Now the mere external observance of the commandments is not sufficient to merit heaven. Hence, when our Saviour was asked: "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" he answered: "The greatest and first commandment is: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul; with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." From these words of our Lord it is clear that the keeping of the commandments must be accompanied by divine charity in order to merit heaven.

A good father is not satisfied with his children if they merely do what he commands them; he also wishes that they should obey him out of love. In like manner, our heavenly Father is not satisfied with us if we merely observe his commandments externally. He also wishes that we should keep them out of real love for him. "Salvation" says St. Thomas "is shown to faith, and prepared for hope, but it is given only to charity."

But what is charity?

"Charity," says St. Thomas, "is that special kind of friendship which is based on the interchange of goods and affections." Jesus Christ said to his disciples that, as he had made them his friends, he had communicated to them all his secrets. (John. xv., 15.)

True love naturally tends to union with the object beloved. It is like a golden chain which binds together the hearts of those that love. Hence, he who loves, always desires the presence of the object of his love. Divine charity, also, establishes, between God and man,

a communication of goods and a union of sentiments. A loving father yearns intensely to communicate himself and all his goods to his children. Now, since God is our Father, he has an unbounded yearning to communicate himself to us. This infinite desire of communicating himself is essential to God's nature, for God is infinite love, and love is always communicative.

We see clearly the effects of this love of God, in the mystery of the Incarnation. We see these effects in the preaching of Christ, in his miracles, in his passion and death. We see them in the mission of the Holy Ghost. We see these effects in the holy sacraments, especially in that of the Holy Eucharist, in which God may be said to have exhausted his omnipotence, his wisdom and his love for man. Finally, we see them in God's most wonderful care for his Church as well as for each individual soul.

In the act of justification by which God frees the soul from sin and sanctifies her, he communicates himself to the soul, not only by grace, charity and other virtues, but he also communicates himself substantially in giving the Holy Ghost.

There is in God the Father, as I have said, an infinite desire of communicating himself and all his goods. In this love he generates from all eternity, his only-begotten son. This is, undoubtedly, the greatest act of his infinite Charity.

But this heavenly Father still continues to beget, in time, children who are by grace what the Son of God is by nature, so that our sonship bears the greatest resemblance to the divine sonship. Hence, St. Paul writes: "Whom He foreknew He also predestined to be made conformable to the Image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren." (Rom. viii., 29.)

Behold, the great things which Divine love effects! We are the sons of God, as the Holy Scripture says: "Ye are the sons of the living God." (Osee i., 107.) In this divine adoption there are infused into the soul not only the grace, the charity and other gifts of the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost Himself, who is the first, the uncreated Gift that God bestows on us.

In justifying and sanctifying us, God might infuse into our souls His grace and charity to such a degree only as would render us simply just and holy, without adopting us as His children. This grace of simple justification would, no doubt, be, in itself, a very great gift, it being a participation in the Divine Nature in a very high degree; so that in all truth, we could exclaim with the Blessed Virgin: "*Fecit mihi magna, qui potens est*—He that is mighty has done great things to me." (Luke i., 49.)

But to give us only such a degree of grace and participation in his Divine Nature, is not enough for the love of God. The grace of adoption is bestowed upon us in so high a degree as to make us really children of God.

But even this measure of the grace of adoption might be bestowed upon us by God in such a manner only as to give, thereby, no more than His charity, grace and created gifts. This latter grace of adoption would, certainly, surpass the former of simple justification, so that, in all truth, we might again exclaim with the Mother of God: "*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo*—He hath showed might in His arm." (Luke i., 51.)

But neither is this gift, great though it be, great enough for the charity which God bears us. God, in His immense charity for us, wishes to bestow greater things upon us, in order to raise us still higher in grace and in the parti-

cipation in his Divine Nature. Hence He goes so far as to give *Himself* to us, in order to sanctify and adopt us in person.

The Holy Ghost unites Himself to His gifts, His grace, and His charity, so that, while infusing these gifts into our souls, He infuses with them Himself in person. On this account St. Paul writes: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, *Who is given to us.*" (Rom. v., 5.) On this very account, the same Apostle calls the Holy Ghost, the *Spirit of adoption*. "For you have not received," says he, "the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the *Spirit of adoption of children*, whereby we cry: Abba, Father; for the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the *children of God*; and if children, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs of Christ." (Rom. viii., 15.) And: "Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." (Galat. iv., 6.)

This Divine charity and grace is, no doubt, the height of God's charity for us, and is at the same time, the height of our dignity and exaltation, because, on receiving these Divine gifts, we receive, at the same time, the Person of the Holy Ghost, who unites Himself to these gifts, as I have said, and by them lives in us, adopts us, deifies us, and urges us on to the performance of every good work.

Truly, the love of God effects great things! But even this is not all—we receive still greater favors. In coming personally into the soul, the Holy Ghost is accompanied by the other Divine Persons also, the Father and the Son, from whom He cannot be separated. Therefore, in the act of justification, the three Divine Persons come person-

ally and really into the soul, as into their Temple, living and dwelling therein as long as the soul perseveres in the grace of God: For this reason, St. John writes: "He that abideth in *charity*, abideth in *God* and *God in him*." (I John iv., 16.) St. Paul writes the same thing: "He who is joined to God is one spirit." (I Cor. vi., 17.)

Jesus Christ obtained for us this grace, when he prayed on the eve of his passion: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." (John, xii., 11, 29.) Jesus Christ asks of His Father that all His followers may participate in the one and same Holy Ghost, so that, in Him and through Him, they may be united to the other Divine persons. St. Bonaventure says that the just not only receive the gifts, but also the person of the Holy Ghost. (1 Sent. d. 14, a. 2, 9, 1.) The same is taught by the renowned Master of Sentences (Lib. i., dist. 14 & 15.) who quotes St. Augustine and others in support of this doctrine. St. Thomas Aquinas asserts the same thing. (I p. 9. 43, a. 3, and 6 & 9. 38 art. 8.)

"Grace," says Suarez, "establishes a most perfect friendship between God and man. Now such a friendship requires the presence of the friend, that is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, therefore, abides in the soul of his friend, in order to unite himself most intimately with him; he resides in the soul of his friend as in his Temple in order to be honored, worshipped, and loved."

From what has been said it is easy to see why charity is called the queen of all virtues. "God is charity," says St. John (1. iv., 8.), "He who abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him." The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of charity, who lives in the just, urges them on to the

practice of virtue and the performance of good works. Hence, as St. Paul says, "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh not evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1. Cor. xiii., 4-7.); that is, Charity, or the Spirit of God, makes the just believe all things revealed by God and taught by his Church, hope for all things, and do all things commanded by the Lord; it makes them God-fearing, it makes them *generous*; they are full of confidence in God, and have courage to undertake every thing for his glory.

Charity makes the just *strong*; it makes them triumph over their passions, over the most violent temptations and the greatest trials; it makes them *obedient*; they promptly follow the voice of God; it makes them *pure*: they love God only and love him because he deserves to be loved on account of his most amiable, infinite perfections. Charity makes the just *ardent*; they wish to inflame all hearts and to see them consumed with divine love.

Charity *ravishes* the souls of the just, so that they seem to be no longer occupied with earthly things, but with loving God alone. Charity makes the just *sigh* unceasingly; it fills their souls with an evident desire to quit the earth in order to be united to God in heaven, and there to love him with all their strength.

Since Charity is unitive, it unites the will of the just to that of their Creator; it makes them love all that God loves and hate all that he hates. Charity thus is the queen of all virtues: it produces them, and brings them

to perfection ; it embraces them all, directs them all to God, gives them all their supernatural dignity and value, and makes them truly deserving of an eternal reward.

Hence it is that the commandment to love God with our whole heart, and our whole soul, and with our whole mind and with our whole strength, is the greatest and first commandment. It is the greatest and first in obligation, because it must be preferred to all other commandments ; it is the greatest and the first in authority because it refers immediately to God, and is intimately associated with him ; it is the greatest and first in dignity, because it is the foundation of all the others and leads to the height of perfection ; it is the greatest and the first in merit, because without charity no good work can merit heaven ; it is the greatest and the first in sweetness, because charity renders the yoke of Jesus infinitely sweet and agreeable, filling the soul with joy, and with the peace and unction of the Holy Ghost ; and finally, this commandment is the greatest and the first in efficacy, because it includes and fulfils all the other commandments, for he who truly loves God can do nothing to displease him.

As charity is the parent and queen of all virtues, it is evident that where this gift of the Holy Ghost is wanting there cannot be any virtue sufficient to merit eternal life. " If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, " says St. Paul, " I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth

me nothing." Indeed all mere natural gifts, however precious and sublime, cannot put us in communication with God, for an effect can never surpass its cause. A natural cause cannot produce a supernatural effect, that is, nothing merely natural can produce divine charity. Charity is produced by the Holy Ghost. "The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." (Rom. v., 5.) When God bestows his grace or charity upon us, it is the same as if he gave himself to us. Now God is an infinite good. It is, therefore, self-evident, that no natural gift, or good work proceeding from mere natural virtue, can put us in possession of an infinite good.

One mortal sin is enough to destroy charity. The soul has a twofold life: the one natural, the other supernatural. The natural life of the soul cannot be lost—cannot be lost even in hell. But the supernatural life of the soul, which is called the life of grace or charity, is destroyed even by one mortal sin. The Holy Ghost himself is this life. Now mortal sin is directly opposed to the Holy Ghost, for mortal sin consists in turning away from God. Sin and charity are as much opposed to each other as life and death. "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi., 23.) As death is the destruction of life, so is sin the destruction of charity. If charity were a merely natural virtue, one sinful act would not destroy it; for a natural habit can subsist notwithstanding a contrary act. But charity is a supernatural virtue, it is the Holy Ghost himself. Hence, as soon as we commit but one mortal sin, charity, that is the Holy Ghost, the true life of the soul, leaves us. "Man," says St. Augustine, "is in light and grace when God is present; and he is in darkness and error as soon as God is absent, not on account of the distance that separates him from us,

but in consequence of the depravity and corruption of our will."

To accustom ourselves to make acts of charity, we should often meditate on our dear Lord, especially on his goodness, mercy and love. We should meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation, on our Lord in his Passion, on the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

We cannot love a person unless we know him; how, then, can we love God unless we often think upon what he is, what he has done, and what he still does for us?

God says in Holy writ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength; these words shall be in thy heart; thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house." (Deut. vi., 6-9.) In these words, our Lord tells us that we should often make acts of love of God, for he who does not frequently make such acts, will scarcely be able to keep the law. Acts of love are the fuel which keeps the holy ardor of divine love burning in our hearts.

Now we are particularly obliged to make acts of charity:

1. When we are in danger of death, especially if we are in mortal sin, and no priest is at hand to absolve us. In this case we are bound to make an act of perfect contrition, which necessarily includes an act of charity.

2. When we are sorely tempted.

3. It is probable that a child is bound to make an act of charity as soon as it comes to the age of reason and is able to appreciate the goodness of God.

4. We are also bound to make an act of charity at the hour of death.

5. St. Alphonsus says that those who neglect to make an act of charity for a whole month are guilty of a grievous sin.

In fine, if we wish to preserve, in our hearts, the precious virtue of divine charity without which we are nothing in the sight of God, we must never let a day pass without making frequent acts of love for God.

It is not necessary to use a particular form of words. Whenever we say the Lord's Prayer, and sincerely desire that God's holy name should be hallowed, that his kingdom should come into our hearts, we make thereby an act of perfect charity. Acts of love may be made without using any words at all. It is an act of charity to give alms, to hear mass, to receive holy communion, to confess our sins, and in fact, to perform any good work with the intention of pleasing God.

3. What does it mean to love God above all things?

It means to be willing to lose all things, even life itself rather than displease him by sin.

Our love for an object must be in proportion to its value. The more valuable a thing is, the more we ought to praise and love it. If an object is of immense value, our love for it should also be immense.

Now God is an infinite good. Whatever good is found in created things, is found in him in an infinite degree. All creatures, however great and excellent they may be, are as nothing compared with God. Whatever good they possess, is entirely from God.

Our love for God, therefore, must be greater than the love we bear to any thing else. We must love God above all things, that is we must love him more than all our

wealth. All the goods of this world are perishable. God alone is unchangeable and immortal. The rich man in the Gospel loved his wealth more than God. Consequently he died in sin, and was buried in hell.

We must love God more than our parents, more than any one in the world. "He that loveth father or mother more than me," says our Lord, "is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. x., 37.)

There is a young woman. She is not a Catholic. She is, however, convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion. She knows that she cannot be saved unless she becomes a practical Catholic. Her parents are wealthy. They are bitter enemies of the Catholic Church. She knows that, if she becomes a Catholic, she will be disinherited, and even expelled from her home. Now, if she wishes to be saved, her love for God must surpass the love she bears to her parents, to her home, and to all earthly enjoyments. She must, as she hopes for heaven, embrace the true faith, no matter what may be the consequences.

There is a mother of a family. She has an amiable and affectionate daughter to whom she is greatly attached. Her daughter is called by Almighty God to leave the world and serve him in religion. Now, this mother must love God more than her daughter. She must be willing to give up her daughter and suffer her to follow her vocation.

We must love God, more than ourselves, more than our very lives. We must be willing even to suffer death rather than renounce Jesus Christ or deny a single article of our holy faith. Now, it is not necessary that we

should feel this love of preference for God ; for such love is not a matter of feeling. Neither is this love a mere act of the understanding by which we know that God is the sovereign good, worthy of all our love. No one, who is in his right senses and believes in God, can doubt that the sovereign good is worthy of all our love. This love of preference lies in the will which deliberately chooses God in preference to all things, and is determined to sacrifice every thing rather than offend him grievously.

A certain person once heard a sermon on the love of God. Amongst other things, she heard the priest say that we must love God more than every thing else, more than our parents, more than our dearest friends. After the sermon, she went to confession and accused herself of being guilty of not loving God more than her parents ; "for," said she, "whatever pleases my parents, also pleases me, and whatever displeases them, displeases me also. I feel that I love them most tenderly, and nothing gives me more pain than to see them in trouble. Now, I do not feel thus towards God. It seems to me I am quite cold and indifferent towards him." The priest said : "Tell me ; would you commit a mortal sin in order to please your parents ?" "Oh, no ! Father," answered the penitent ; "I would rather die than commit a mortal sin." "Then be quite easy," said the priest, "for you love God more than your parents." Indeed, we may feel more intense love for our parents than for God, and yet not sin against charity ; for, as long as we are ready even to give them up, were God to require this of us, we would not really prefer them to him.

4. Why are we bound to love God?

Because he is our Creator, our Redeemer, and our supreme happiness for time and eternity.

All sanctity as well as all perfection consists in loving Jesus Christ, our God, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sovereign Good and happiness. Whoever loves me, says Jesus Christ, shall be loved by my Father. "My Father loves you, because you have loved me." (John xvi., 27.) "Some," says St. Francis de Sales, "make perfection consist in austerity, others in prayer, others in the frequentation of the sacraments, and others in alms-giving. But they are all mistaken. Perfection consists in loving God with our whole heart." "Charity," says the Apostle, "is the bond of perfection." (Colos. iii., 14.) It unites and preserves all the other virtues. *Love God*, says St. Augustine, *and do what you please*; for love will teach you to do nothing that could offend God, but, on the contrary, to do every thing that will please him.

And does not God deserve all our love? *He has loved us from all eternity.* (Jer. li., 5.) Children of men, says the Lord, remember that I have loved you first. You were not yet in the world—the world itself did not yet exist, and even then I loved you. As long as I am God I love you, and I have loved you as long as I have loved myself. St. Agnes was then right in saying to the young nobleman who asked her hand in marriage: "My heart already belongs to another. No creature can henceforth have any claim upon it—all my affections belong to my God, who has loved me first, and from all eternity."

God wishing to gain man by kindness, was pleased to load him with favors, in order to win his love. *I will bind him*, says God, *with chains of love.* (Osee xi., 4.) These

chains are the gifts which God has bestowed on man. He has given him a soul, created after his own image, gifted with memory, understanding, and will, and a body endowed with senses. It was for the love of man that God created the heavens, the earth, the sea, the mountains, the valleys, the plains, minerals, vegetables, animals of so many species; in a word—all nature; and in return for so many benefits, God requires only from man his love. "O Lord, my God," says St. Augustine, "every thing that I behold on earth, and above the earth, speaks to me and exhorts me to love thee, because every thing tells me that it was created by thee and created for my benefit." The Abbot de Rance, the reformer of La Trappe, never looked at the hills, the fountains, the birds, the flowers, or the heavens, without feeling his soul inflamed with the love of God.

Whenever St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi beheld a flower, the love of God was enkindled in her heart and she cried out: "It was for love of me that God resolved from all eternity to create this flower!" This thought was a dart of love which penetrated her heart, and united it every day more intimately with God. St. Teresa, at the sight of a tree, a rivulet, a meadow, or fountain, reproached herself for loving God so little, though he had created all those beautiful objects to gain her love. A pious solitary, imagining that he heard the same reproaches from the herbs and flowers which he met on his walks, was wont to say to them: "You call me an ungrateful creature—you tell me that it was through love of me God created you, and that, nevertheless, I do not love him. I understand you—be silent, and do not reproach me any more."

God, not content with having created for us so many

wonderful things, has done still more; in order to gain our love, he has given us himself. The eternal Father has given us his only-begotten Son. (John iii., 16.) We were all dead in sin. An excess of love, as the apostle says, induced God to send us his dearly-beloved Son to discharge our debts, and to restore us the life of grace (Ephes. ii., 4, 5.) by giving us his Son. In order to spare us, he did not spare his dearly-beloved Son. With his divine Son he has given us all things (Rom. viii., 32.); his grace, his love, his kingdom; for all these things are incomparably less than his only-begotten Son.

The Son of God was also entirely given us through love (Gal. ii., 2.); and, in order to redeem us from eternal death, and to restore to us the grace and heaven which we had forfeited, *He was made man.* (John i., 14.) *He humbled himself.* (Philipp. ii., 7.) The Sovereign of the Universe humbled himself, so as to take the form of a servant, and to subject himself to all human miseries.

But what is most astonishing is, that though he could have saved us without suffering and dying he, nevertheless, chose torments, death, contempt, and a cruel ignominious death, the death of the cross. (Philipp. ii., 8.) And why did Jesus, without necessity, deliver himself up to these torments? It was, because he loved us, and wished to show us the entire extent of his love, by suffering for us what no one has ever yet endured.

St. Paul inflamed with the love of Jesus said: *The charity of Christ presses us.* (2 Cor. v., 14.) He means to say that it is not so much what Jesus Christ has suffered for us, as the love which he has displayed in his sufferings, that should oblige and almost force us to love him. "To know that Jesus Christ has died on the cross for love of

us" says St. Francis de Sales, "is sufficient to press our hearts with a love, whose violence is as sweet as it is powerful."

The love which Jesus Christ had for us was so great that it made him long for the hour of his death, in order to make it known to all men. I have to be baptized in my own blood, he said, and how I long for the hour when I can show to men the great love I have for them. (Luke xii., 50.)

St. John, speaking of our Saviour's Passion, says that our Lord called this hour, *his own hour* (John xiii., 1.), because he desired nothing so much as the moment of his death; for it was then that he wished to give men the last proof of his love by dying for them on the cross.

But what could have induced God to die, between two thieves, on an infamous gibbet? It was love, infinite love. No wonder that St. Francis of Paula cried out so often on beholding a crucifix: "O Love! O Love! O Love!" Animated by the same spirit, we, too, should cry out when we behold Jesus on the cross: "O Love! O infinite Love!"

Who would believe, if faith did not assure us, that an all-powerful God, the Master of all things, and supremely happy in himself—that such a God could love man so much that he seems to act as if he were beside himself.

"We have seen wisdom itself," says St. Lawrence Justinian; "we have seen the Eternal Word become foolish with the excessive love which he bears to men." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said the same thing one day, while in an ecstasy. Taking a crucifix in her hands she cried out: "O my Jesus, thy love for me has even made thee foolish. Yes, I say it, and always will say it, love

has made thee foolish." "But no," replies St. Denis the Areopagite, "no, it is not foolishness; it is the property of divine love to induce him who loves to give himself up entirely to the object of his love."

No one can conceive how ardently this fire of love burns in the heart of Jesus Christ. If, instead of dying once, he had been required to die a thousand times, his great love would have made the sacrifice. If, instead of dying for all men, he had been required to die for the salvation of only one, he would have cheerfully submitted. In fine, if, instead of remaining three hours upon the cross, he had been required to remain there until the day of judgment, he would have willingly consented, for the love of Jesus Christ was far greater than his sufferings. O divine love! how much more ardent you are than you seem to be exteriorly! It is true indeed, O my Jesus! that thy blood and thy wounds give proof of a great love but they do not show us its entire extent. These exterior signs are slight indeed, when compared with the immense fire of love that inwardly consumes thee. The greatest mark of love is to give one's life for his friends; but even this mark of love was not sufficient to express all the love of Jesus Christ.

"God is love." This is the language in which every thing speaks to us in heaven and on earth. But nothing in heaven or on earth speaks this in such burning words as the Mystery of Love—the Blessed Eucharist, the last legacy of love.

True love knows no bounds, feels no burden, cares for no hardship. It believes that it may and can do all things. Such is true love; such is the love of Jesus Christ. To gain our love he thinks that he may and can do all

things. Hence those strange abasements, those mysterious humiliations of the God-Man, in presence of which reason is astounded, the senses revolt, the heart is terrified, and unbelief repeats its ceaseless question: "How is this possible?" But a voice proceeds from the altar, and that voice answers us: "It is thus that God has loved the world."

The pretended impossibilities of faith are nothing else than the ineffable condescensions of a God who loves us as God; the height, the breadth, the depth of *all* the mysteries of our holy faith, are but the height, the breadth, and the depth of the charity of Jesus Christ. His blood, which was shed to the last drop, is His title to the most beautiful of all royalties, the royalty of love. His crown of thorns is the diadem of love. His crib, and cross, and altar, are the thrones of love, and the holy reception of his body and blood is the banquet of love.

We read in Holy Scripture that King Assuerus, to manifest the riches and glory of his kingdom, made a solemn feast which lasted a hundred and foreshore days. Jesus Christ, the king of kings, has also vouchsafed to manifest the riches of his treasures, and the majesty of his glory in a feast worthy of his greatness; it is the heavenly banquet of Holy Communion in which he gives himself entirely to us. This heavenly feast is not confined to the short space of a few days like that of King Assuerus. It has already lasted more than eighteen hundred years. We partake of it every day, and it will continue even to the end of the world. "Come," exclaims the royal prophet, "come and behold the works of God, the prodigious things he has wrought upon earth." (Ps. xlv., 9.)

How admirable are the wisdom and depth of his counsels! How wonderful are the means which God's love uses for the salvation of men!

The Incarnation was a miracle of divine love and wisdom so vast and so deep that the human mind can never fathom it. The passion and death of our Lord gives us an awful and unspeakable illustration of divine love. The last legacy of the love of Jesus combines both those mysteries in one mystery so stupendous that the very conception of it overwhelms the soul. "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end;" and, in the fullness of that love, the end was the grandest illustration of his unutterable love.

Let us seat ourselves in spirit at the Last Supper in the midst of our Lord's disciples. The shadow of parting is on the festivity, and the words of our dear Lord are words of tenderness, but also of farewell. "I will not leave you orphans," he says, "I will come to you." (John xiv., 18.) "And now, O Father, I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Preserve them in thy name, whom thou hast given to me, that like us, they may be one." And then turning to his disciples with all the love of a fond father, he says: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Love one another as I have loved you."

Now, at the last hour, the last time that he was to behold his beloved apostles assembled, the last time that he was to exhort and encourage them before going through the dark realm of death, he thought of the perfect gift and blessing, the richest and most precious inheritance, the most inestimable of all things that love ever conceived or bestowed.

Jesus, our Father, in leaving us, wished to combine, in one institution so much love and charity, that man, on beholding it, could no longer withhold his affection. Our dear Lord said: "I will unlock the barred gates of Paradise, I will place again in the midst of it the Tree of Life, "that he who eateth of it may not die." And the angels shall minister to the being with whom I become one; and he shall shine with a brilliancy that even the Father will admire, a brilliancy that will attract him and the Holy Ghost to come thither and abide. And thus I shall make the soul of my beloved a temple, and a throne; and a heaven, and I will dwell there for evermore.

Ponder well, my soul, this awful privilege—union with Christ. The Lord of heaven is your guest; he is made one with you, as two pieces of wax are melted into each other. We become one with God! One with the eternal! One with the most Holy! Oh, how little and vain are all the honors and treasures of this world when compared with the overwhelming dignity of being one with God! How can we ever lose sight of the sublime thought. "This is life eternal to know thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is "life eternal" to know Jesus "in the breaking of bread," in the Blessed Sacrament.

As soon as we are one with him, we share in what he possesses: we enjoy his happiness, we live his own immortal life! "He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him, and I will raise him up on the last day." (St. John.)

"So dearly has God loved the world that he has given his only-begotten Son to be the life of the world." "God is love," and this sweet Sacrament is the mystery

of his love. It was on the eve of his Passion, the very night when men were plotting his ruin, when they decided to condemn him to a most shameful death, that Jesus left us this living pledge of his love. He did not leave a memorial of bronze or marble, as the great ones of this world leave behind them; no, he left his own living, life-giving Body and Blood—he left himself. Did not God tell us long ago by the mouth of his prophet, that his delight was to be with the children of men? Did he not assure us with his own blessed lips, “That he would not leave us orphans, but that he would be with us always, even to the end of the world”? “God is love.” He loves us with an infinite love. He has given us this earth, he has given us heaven; but all this does not satisfy his love. He gives us himself, his body and blood, his soul and divinity. No wonder that God complains: “What more could I do for thee, beloved soul, than I have done?” Yes, in this Sacrament, God has exhausted his Omnipotence; for, though he is all-powerful, he cannot do more for us than he has done. He has exhausted his infinite wisdom; for though he is all-wise, he cannot invent a more wonderful proof of his love. He has exhausted his infinite wealth; for in this Sacrament he has poured out all the treasures of his unfathomable love.

God is love, and he gives himself to us in the disguise of love. What an act of charity to a poor weak-sighted mortal to hide the dazzling light from his eyes! and what loving kindness in our dear Lord to hide his dazzling splendor from our weak, sinful souls! Were he to appear in his glory, who is there that could look upon him and live? If we look into the sun but for a moment, we are blinded by its brightness; how then could we gaze

upon the unveiled splendors of the Eternal Sun of Justice? The prophet Daniel saw only an angel, and he fainted away; how then could we bear the sight of the King of angels? When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, where he had been conversing with God, his face shone with such unearthly lustre that the people could not look upon him. He had to veil his face so that all might see him and speak to him. Now, if men were unable to look upon the face of a man, how shall we be able to look upon the face of God? The Apostles beheld on Mount Thabor but a faint glimpse of the glory of Jesus, and they fell prostrate on the ground. St. John, while in Patmos, beheld only in a vision the glory of Jesus, and he fell to the ground as if dead. How then can we, poor, weak sinners, bear to gaze on the entire fullness of the splendors of God's infinite Majesty? Oh, what loving goodness then in Jesus, our Lord, to hide his glory behind the veils of the Sacrament, that we may approach him and speak to him without fear, as a child to its father, as a friend to a friend! Our divine Redeemer took many forms to attract the love of man. That God, who is unchangeable, appeared at one time as a little babe in a crib; at another as an exile in Egypt; now he appears as a docile child among the Doctors of the Law, and again as an apprentice in the workshop of St. Joseph: now he appears as a servant in the house of Nazareth, and again as a good shepherd, seeking the lost sheep of Israel; now he is the physican of body and soul, curing diseases, and forgiving sins, and again he appears as a malefactor, bleeding to death on the cross; now he is the conqueror of death and hell, the glorious king of heaven and earth, and finally he shows himself as bread upon the altar.

Jesus chose to exhibit himself to us in these various guises; but whatever character he assumed, it was always that of a lover. Is it not strange that God who is so good, so amiable, should be forced to have recourse to so many stratagems to win our love? He commands us to love him, he promises heaven if we obey, and he threatens with the flames of hell if we refuse.

To win our love he has, as it were, annihilated himself. He annihilated himself in the Incarnation, but he has gone even still farther in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Ah! my Lord, canst thou devise any thing else to make thyself loved? "Make known his inventions," exclaims the prophet Isaias. (Xii., 4.) Go, O redeemed souls! go and publish everywhere the loving devices of this loving God—the devices which he has planned and executed to win our love. After lavishing so many of his gifts upon us, he has been pleased to bestow himself, and to bestow himself in so wonderful a manner.

If a king speaks a confidential word to one of his vassals, if he smiles upon him, how honored and happy does that vassal consider himself! How much more honored and happy would he be were the king to seek his friendship, were he to request his company every day at table, were he to assign to him an abode in his own palace!

Ah! my King, my beloved Jesus, thou hast come down from heaven, and still daily comest down upon earth to be with men as thy brothers, and to give thyself wholly to them from the excess of the love thou bearest them! "He loved us, and delivered himself up for us." "Yes," exclaims St. Augustine, "this most loving and most merciful God, through his love to man, chose to give him

not only his goods, but even his very self." The affection which this sovereign Lord entertains towards us sinful creatures, is so immense that it induced him to give himself wholly to us. He was born for us, he lived for us, he died for us, he even offers up his life and all his blood for us every day in the Mass.

O power of divine love! The greatest of all has made himself the lowest of all! Love triumphs even over God. God, who can never be conquered by any one, has been conquered by love!

What breast so savage as not to soften before such a God of love on the altar; what hardness will such love not subdue, what love does it not claim? Thus he would appear and stay with us, who wished to be loved and not feared. Even the very brutes, if we do them a kindness, if we give them some trifle, are grateful for it. They come near us, they do our bidding after their own fashion, and show signs of gladness at our approach. How comes it, then, that we are so ungrateful towards God—the same God who has bestowed his whole self upon us, who descends every day upon our altars to become the food of our souls!

Love is the loadstone of love. If you wish to be loved, you must love. There is no more effectual means to secure the affections of another than to love him and to show him that you love him. Ah! my Jesus, this rule holds good for others, holds good for all, but not for thee! Men are grateful to all, but not to thee. Thou art at a loss what more to do, to show men the love thou bearest them. Thou hast positively nothing more left to do to allure the affections of men, and yet how many are there among men who really love thee? Ah! God has not deserved such treatment from us!

O man, whoever thou art, thou hast witnessed the love which God has borne thee in becoming man, in suffering and dying for thee, and in giving himself to thee as food. How long will it be before God shall know, by experience and by deeds, the love thou bearest him! Indeed, every man at the sight of God clothed in flesh, and choosing a life of such duration, and a death of such ignominy, choosing to dwell a loving prisoner in our churches, every one, I say, ought to be enkindled with love towards so loving a God. "Oh! that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down; the mountains would melt away at thy presence, the waters would burn with fire." (Isai. lxiv. 1-2.) It was thus the prophet cried out before the arrival of the Divine Word upon earth. Oh! that thou wouldst deign to leave the heavens and to descend upon earth and become man amongst us! On beholding thee like one of themselves the mountains would melt away: that is, men would surmount all obstacles, all difficulties in the way of observing thy laws and thy counsels; the waters would burn with fire! Surely, thou wouldst enkindle such a furnace of love in the human heart, that even the most frozen souls would catch the flame of thy blessed love! And, in truth, after the Incarnation of the Son of God, how brilliantly has the fire of divine love shone in many souls! It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that God was more loved in one century after the coming of Jesus Christ than in the entire four centuries preceding. How many youths, how many nobles, how many monarchs have abandoned wealth, honor and power, and sought the desert and the cloister, in order to give themselves up unreservedly to the love of

their Saviour? How many martyrs have gone rejoicing to torments and to death! How many tender virgins have refused the proffered hand of the great ones of this world, in order to live and die for Jesus Christ, and thus repay, in some measure, the affection of a God who loved them to such excess!

It is said that when the Gospel was announced to the Japanese, while they were being instructed on the sublimity, the beauty and the infinite amiability of God, on the great mysteries of religion, on all that God has done for man—how God was born in poverty, how God suffered and died for their salvation, they exclaimed in a transport of joy and admiration: “Oh! how great, how good, how amiable, is the God of the christians!” When they heard that there was an express command to love God, and a threatened punishment for not loving Him, they were surprised. “What!” said they, “a command given to reasonable men to love that God who has loved us so much? Why, is it not the greatest happiness to love Him, and the greatest of misfortunes not to love Him? What! are not the christians always at the foot of the altars of their God, penetrated with a deep sense of His goodness, and inflamed with His holy love?” And when they were told that there were christians who not only did not love God, but even offended and outraged Him, “O unworthy people! O ungrateful hearts!” exclaimed they with indignation: “Is it possible? In what accursed land dwell those men devoid of hearts and feelings?”

5. How many kinds of love of God are there ?

Two kinds : 1, perfect love, which is to love God for his own sake ; and 2, imperfect love, which is to love God for the sake of his gifts.

The manner of doing a thing may be perfect or imperfect. It is perfect when the end proposed is fully attained ; it is imperfect when, though we do not attain the end, we endeavor to do all in our power to succeed.

Now, the end and object of the precept of charity are to love God with all the powers of our soul and body, and to be united to him in such a manner as to find it impossible to wish, to seek, or to love any thing but him, so that God is all our joy, all our honor, all our wisdom, all our riches, all our happiness. Such perfect love, however, is found only in heaven.

The moment a soul enters heaven, God communicates and unites himself to it as far as it is capable, and according to its merits. He unites himself to the soul, not only by means of his gifts, his lights and his loving attractions, as he does in this life, but he also unites himself to the soul, by his own essence. As fire penetrates iron, and seems to transform it entirely into fire, so does God penetrate the soul, and fill it with himself, in such a manner that, though it does not lose its own essence, yet, it is so replenished by God and buried in the immense ocean of the divine essence, that it finds itself, as it were, absorbed and transformed into God.

This spiritual union with God causes the soul to languish with love. It remains immersed in the infinite goodness of God ; it then forgets itself, and, being inebriated with divine love, thinks of nothing but God. (Ps. xxxv., 9.)

As one who is intoxicated forgets himself, so does the soul in heaven think only of loving and pleasing God. It desires to possess him entirely, and it really possesses him without the fear of ever losing him; it desires to give itself entirely to God; it really does so, every moment and without reserve. God shows the soul his love, and will continue to do so for all eternity; and the soul loves God infinitely more than it loves itself. Its heaven consists in the knowledge that God is infinitely happy and that his happiness is eternal.

Here it may be objected that love united to the desire of reward is not the love of true friendship, but rather the love of self. "I answer," says St. Alphonsus, "that we must distinguish between temporal rewards promised by man, and the reward of heaven which God has promised to those that love him. The rewards of men are distinct from their own persons, for they never bestow themselves, but only their goods; whereas the chief recompense which God bestows upon the blessed is himself." (Gen. xv., 1.) To desire heaven is to desire God who is our last end.

St. Francis de Sales says that supposing there were an infinite goodness, that is, a God to whom we did not in any manner belong and with whom we could have no union, no communication, we would undoubtedly esteem such a God more than ourselves; we might have even the desire of loving him; but we could not love him in reality because love looks to union with the object beloved. Our soul will never be entirely at peace until it is perfectly united to God in heaven. It is true that those who love God enjoy peace in conforming to the divine will; but they cannot enjoy perfect rest in this life, because such rest is obtained only in heaven where we will

see God face to face, and where we shall be consumed with divine love. As long as the soul is not in full possession of God, it is restless, it sighs and mourns. (Isai. xxxviii., 17.) The good which I expect is so great, says St. Francis of Assisium, that every pain is to me pleasure. These ardent sighs and desires to be united with God and possess him in heaven, are so many acts of perfect charity. St. Thomas teaches that true charity does not exclude the desire of those rewards which God has prepared for us in heaven; because the principle object of our desire is God, who constitutes the essential happiness of the blessed, for true friendship desires the full possession of the friend.

Such is the reciprocal communication expressed by the Spouse in the Canticles. (Cant. ii., 16.) In heaven God bestows himself upon the soul, to the extent of its capacity and according to the measure of its merits.

The soul, on the other hand, gives itself entirely to God; it acknowledges its own nothingness in comparison with the infinite loveliness of God. It sees that God deserves to be loved infinitely more than it can love God. Hence the soul is more desirous to please God than to please itself. It rejoices at the glory it receives from God; but rejoices because God is thereby glorified. At the sight of God the soul feels sweetly constrained to love him with all its strength. The soul loves God so much that, were it possible, it would rather suffer all the pains of hell, with the privilege of loving God, than enjoy all the delights of heaven without God's love. The soul knows that God is infinitely more deserving of love than itself, and therefore it has a much greater desire to love God than to be loved by him. Hence the desire of going to heaven to enjoy and to please God, by loving him is a pure

and perfect love. The pleasure which the blessed experience in loving God, does not affect the purity of their love; for they are much more pleased with the love which they have for God, than with the satisfaction which they find in being loved.

In this life, such perfect love is impossible. We can only sigh and aspire after it. The cares, and wants, and trials of this life are an obstacle to such perfect charity; they prevent our hearts and souls from being lifted up to God in perfect love. In this world, says St. Thomas Aquinas, man cannot perfectly fulfill the precept of loving God. None but Jesus Christ, who was the Man-God, and Mary who was full of grace and free from original sin, observed this law perfectly. As for us, unhappy children of Adam, our love for God is always mingled with some imperfection.

The love that God requires of us in this life consists in being determined to renounce health, wealth, honors, all the goods and pleasures of this world, and even life itself rather than forfeit even for an instant the friendship of God. This kind of love God requires of us when he says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength," and this command is binding under pain of mortal sin.

By this same commandment God also requires, at *least* under pain of venial sin, that we should consecrate to him all our affection. He does indeed not command us to love nothing but him, but he does command us to love nothing apart from him, to have no affection for any thing except for his sake. It is in this manner that many just and holy persons love God. It was this divine love that urged

the Apostles to go even to the extremities of the earth to announce the Gospel. "I am sure," exclaims St. Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities. . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God." (Rom. viii., 38, 39.) It was this divine love that encouraged the holy confessors to enter the dungeons, and suffer there for their holy faith. It was this love that encouraged the martyrs to ascend the scaffold and shed their blood for Jesus Christ. It was this divine love that filled the deserts with anchorites; it induced kings and queens to renounce the crown and sceptre and submit to the holy yoke of obedience in the monastery. It was this love that induced thousands of tender virgins to give up all that this world holds dear in order to become the spouses of Jesus Christ, and they cheerfully endured every torment rather than to prove faithless to their heavenly Bridegroom.

There lived in the thirteenth century, in a certain town of Brabant, a pious maiden, named Mary. From her earliest infancy she consecrated her heart to God. Her good parents encouraged her in her virtuous life, and exhorted her to be very devoted to the Blessed Mother of God. When Mary grew older she renewed the vow of virginity which she had made in her childhood, and added the vow of poverty, in order to resemble more closely her divine spouse, who was so poor that he had not even where to lay his head. She renounced all claim to her lawful inheritance, and vowed to beg her bread from door to door. She even shared with the poor whatever alms she received. She thus led, for many years, a life of great hardships, a life of great virtue. At last God rewarded her, as he always rewards those whom he loves: he allowed great sufferings to come upon her.

Mary was virtuous and modest; she was beautiful and she was virtuous. It happens too often unhappily that great beauty leads to sin. Beauty and virtue do not always dwell together. Beauty is too often, alas! but the shining veil that hides a frail and simple heart. However this was not the case with the pious maiden. She was beautiful and she was virtuous. Mary was admired by all on account of her great virtue and her great beauty. There was especially one who not only admired, but also loved her with passionate love. But his love was not pure; it was not from God. His love was base, animal passion. The demon of impurity took entire possession of his heart. This demon urged him on, and gave him no rest. One day this unhappy man met the pious maiden and disclosed to her the guilty passion that burned in his heart. He offered her gold and silver and costly garments; he offered her honors and wealth in abundance. But Mary was not one of these frail creatures who sell their innocence for a gay dress, or a pretty ring. She shrank in horror from the guilty proposal. She told the wicked man that from her infancy, she had consecrated her heart to God, that she could never love any other bridegroom than Jesus. She exhorted him earnestly to think of death and to beware of the just vengeance of heaven. But the wretched man was blinded by passion; he was deaf to every warning. The thought of gratifying his unholy desires alone occupied his mind. Day and night, waking and sleeping, this one thought, this one desire possessed him. He did not pray for strength; he did not approach the sacraments. He gave himself up entirely to the power of the demon.

In order to effect his guilty purpose, he hid one day a

silver goblet in the sack of the pious maiden. He then went to her, boldly accused her of the theft, and threatened her with imprisonment and death, if she still continued to refuse him. Mary protested that she was innocent. She declared in a resolute tone that she would die the most cruel death rather than to offend God by mortal sin. Then the wicked man, in a rage, snatched the sack from her and drew forth the silver goblet which he himself had placed therein. Then, in malicious triumph, he cried out: "Behold here the proof of your guilt. Now if you still continue to refuse me, you shall suffer imprisonment and death." The poor, helpless maiden grew pale; she trembled in every limb. She wept, and prayed to God for strength; and God, the comforter of the poor and the fatherless, strengthened her, and she answered boldly: "No; never will I consent to sin. I will rather die innocent than become the victim of your guilty passions."

Wild with rage at seeing himself thus baffled, this wicked wretch swore that he would be revenged. His passionate love was now turned into deadly hate. This is always the case with sinful love. Sensual love turns sooner or later into deadly hatred. This we often see even in this life. This is especially the case with the damned in hell. Ah! how those unhappy souls that once loved one another during life with sinful love, ah! how they curse and hate one another in hell!

Holding the goblet in his hand, this wicked wretch ran in haste to the judge, accused the innocent maiden of theft, and, in proof of his accusation, he showed the goblet which he had taken from her sack. He accused her, moreover, of the fearful crime of witchcraft. He said that by her magic spells she inflamed the hearts of men

with sinful love; that she had even bewitched himself, so that he could neither rest nor eat nor sleep. At first, the judge would not believe his words, knowing the unblemished reputation which Mary always enjoyed. He tried to defend her against the accusations of this wicked man. But this monster would not desist till Mary was taken prisoner.

One day, this pious maiden was at the house of her parents, praying and weeping in her great affliction. Suddenly the officers of justice entered, seized her, dragged her away with them and cast her into prison. In order to force her to confess the crimes of which she was accused, they put her to the torture. The innocent maiden was stretched on a rack, she was tormented in the most inhuman manner; but she continued to protest her innocence. "It is true," she said "the goblet was found in my wallet, but I did not put it there, and I know not who did." "Do you not hear what she says," shrieked the accuser triumphantly; "she acknowledges herself that the goblet was found in her sack. What more proof do you need?" "Yes," he cried in a rage, "she is a thief, she is a sorceress. Let her be put to death!" Mary was poor, and the poor have but few friends on earth. She had no one to plead her cause, no one to defend her. Her accuser, on the contrary, was wealthy, and wealth has more power in this world than innocence and justice. Without further examination she was condemned to death. As she was being led to the place of execution, she passed a statue of our Lady that stood by the way-side. She begged permission to pray for a moment before our Lady's shrine. Her request was granted. And now she implored the Blessed Mother of God to as-

sist her in her agony. She prayed for those who were the cause of her death, and begged God especially to forgive her accuser. She prayed, moreover, that all those who should visit her grave, might obtain relief in all their sorrows. She then arose from her knees and with a firm step walked on to the place of execution. All who saw her, wept. Even the heart of the executioner was touched. His hands trembled, his face grew pale, and the tears came unbidden to his eyes. "Holy maiden," he cried sobbing aloud, "forgive me before I perform my sad task; pray for me when you appear before your bridegroom, Jesus." "I forgive you from my heart," answered the innocent victim; "I forgive all those who have injured me, and pray that God may forgive them their sins."

Then Mary was bound hand and foot with heavy iron chains. A large deep grave was dug for her, and she like an innocent lamb was cast into the grave. The grave was then filled up with earth, and Mary was buried alive!

The executioner then took a long sharp stake, and, by means of a heavy sledge, he drove it with repeated blows through her tender body. O, what a frightful death! This was, in those days, the punishment of all who were found guilty of witchcraft. The by-standers wept and trembled with horror, on witnessing the cruel death of the innocent maiden. Her accuser alone—that wretched monster—remained unmoved. Like an incarnate demon, he gloated in malicious triumph over her sufferings. But the justice of God overtook him. Scarcely had this wicked man left the place of execution, when, by God's permission, the devil entered into him and took full possession of him. He now began to rave and howl like a wild beast. He became so furious that he had to be chained

to prevent him from doing harm. His hands and feet were bound fast with heavy iron chains; and, as all were afraid of him, he was cast into a dark, deep dungeon. In this frightful state he remained for seven years. At last, his friends carried him to various shrines of our Blessed Lady, where many miracles had been wrought; but the demon declared, in a rage, that he would never leave this wicked man till he had been brought to the grave of the murdered maiden.

Mary, the heroic martyr of virginity, was not long dead when God made her innocence known. Many miracles were wrought at her grave. The Blessed Virgin Mary herself was seen one night coming down from heaven, accompanied by a band of beautiful virgins. Thrice they went around her grave in solemn procession, and then disappeared. In consequence of this a chapel was built over Mary's grave; and there many a sad heart came and found relief. Thither too this wicked man was brought by his friends, and instantly the devil departed from him. He was cured, and finally he repented of his enormous crimes.

6. What is it to love our neighbor as ourselves?

It is to do as Jesus Christ has said: "All things, therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." (Matt., vii., 12.)

God has given us two precepts of charity, one to love him above all things, and the other, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Is not the first sufficient? It seems reasonable that, if we love God, we should also love those upon whom he has bestowed his gifts. Hence St. John says: "This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, loveth also his brother." (1 John, iv., 21.)

But all men do not see how the love of God necessarily includes the love of our neighbor. Even in the natural sciences, a man may have correct principles, and yet be unable to draw correct conclusions. Hence God has given us a special and distinct command to love our neighbor: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." God has made the love which we have for ourselves, the rule and measure of the love which we are to bear to our neighbor. To love, then, our neighbor properly, we must first love ourselves properly. Inordinate self-love is always bad. Every sin springs from inordinate self-love, that is, from a wilful, disorderly and obstinate attachment to one's self or to some other creature. This inordinate self-love built the ill-fated city of Babylon; its walls arose in contempt and hatred of God. We must love ourselves in God, and for God's sake.

This love of ourselves is either natural or supernatural. It is natural when its object is the goods of nature. In this sense St. Paul says: "No man ever hated his own flesh." (Eph., v., 29.) Such love, when properly directed, is not condemned by God; for God is the author of nature as well as of grace.

Love of ourselves is supernatural when its object is the goods of grace and glory. As we are composed of body and soul, it is our duty to take care of both. The same commandment which obliges us to show charity to our neighbor in his temporal wants, obliges us also, as St. Augustine and St. Thomas teach, to show charity towards our own body.

Now, as Christians we love our body, because it comes from God, and is capable of contributing to his glory. "Present your members as instruments of justice unto

God," says St. Paul. We also love and respect our body because it was consecrated in baptism and became a temple of the Holy Ghost. "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which you are." (1 Cor., iii., 16.) Again, we love our body because it is destined to rise bright and glorious on the last day, and to live reunited with the soul, and rejoice with it in heaven for all eternity. "The hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John, v., 28, 29.)

Finally, we love and respect our body, because it assists us in performing our duties towards God, towards our neighbor, and towards ourselves. We are, therefore, obliged to take proper care of our bodily health.

In taking care of the health of the body, we may be guilty of two excesses: one in taking too much, and the other in taking too little care of the body. There are some who take as much care of the body as if the preservation of their health or rather the gratification of the senses were the sole or at least the principal object of our life on earth. Such love for the body is sinful and leads to the destruction of both soul and body. There are others, who take too little care of their health. They are indiscreet in the practice of corporal penances; indiscreet in fasting, in night-watching, in excessive labor. These indiscreet penitents commit four thefts, says St. Bernard: they rob the body of its strength and the mind of its

vigor, and, thus, by degrees render both unfit for the practice of virtue.

Moreover, they rob their neighbor of the good example they owe him, and finally they rob God of his honor. Such indiscreet mortifications are, therefore, displeasing to God. Discretion must guide us in all our actions, affections, in all our conduct; it must assign to each virtue, its proper time, and its proper place; without discretion virtue becomes really a vice.

The care of our bodily health, then, should be moderate, and such care, says St. Alphonsus, is a virtue. "It is in the order of divine Providence," says St. Francis de Sales, "that we should treat our bodies according to their natural weakness, treating them as we treat poor people, with patience and charity, and this exercise is not one of the least meritorious, because it mortifies our pride. If, in the exercise of our duties, we contract a sickness, or shorten our life, we must bless the Lord for it, and suffer with a joyful heart. Love and respect for Divine Providence and charity towards ourselves oblige us to abstain from such practices of penance as would undermine our health; for, as it would betray effeminacy on our part to have too much care for our health, so, on the other hand, it would be cruel pride to neglect such care altogether. As the soul cannot carry the body when fed too well, so, on the other hand, the body when fed too little cannot carry the soul. Let the body be treated like a child; let it be chastised, but not killed." It is related in the life of this saint that he used to abstain from such mortifications as were likely to endanger his health. Now, if it is our duty to take care of our body, it is far more our duty to take care of our soul. It is especially by caring for our soul that we show true love towards ourselves.

But what does it mean to take care of our soul? It is to use every means in our power to save and sanctify our soul. The usual means are prayer, meditation, the frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, the mortification of the senses, exterior and interior recollection, the control of our passions, the performance of good works, especially of such as are prescribed by the commandments of God and his holy Church.

In laboring for our sanctification, our chief object should be to glorify God in this world and in the next. "For," says St. Thomas, "the ultimate and chief end for which God created heaven is that we may glorify God in heaven. The glory which we are to receive should be only the secondary object which we have in view in laboring for our salvation and sanctification. It is but the means to reach the principle end. No one can glorify God in heaven but he whom God glorifies. It is, therefore, self-deception, and self-interest to labor for our salvation only for the sake of the glory which we are to receive."

The object of our Saviour's life on earth was to glorify his heavenly Father, in order that the Father in turn, might glorify his Son. "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee. I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now glorify thou me, O Father, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with thee." (John, xvii., 1, 4, 5.) If we in imitation of our dear Saviour, pass our life in glorifying God, that God may also glorify us, we have indeed true supernatural love of ourselves—the love of hope which prompts us to love God as our supreme good and reward, and the love of charity which makes us love God and ourselves in him and for him, and

causes us to refer all things to his glory. As the true love of ourselves consists in loving ourselves in God and for God, so the true love of our neighbor consists in loving him in God and for God. When we recommend a dear friend to any one we usually say: "The kindness you show him I will consider as a favor conferred on myself." In like manner, when our Saviour declared that "the second commandment is like to the first," he wished to give us to understand that the love which we bear him should induce us to love our neighbor also. "If thou lovest me," said Jesus to St. Peter, "feed my sheep" (John, xxi., 17); that is to say: If you really love me, you will show your love by taking good care of my sheep? Our Saviour has substituted our neighbor for himself. He wishes us to bestow on our neighbor the charity and gratitude which we owe to God himself. He has transferred to our neighbor all the claims that he has on us and he desires us to pay to our neighbor all that we owe to himself. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt., xxv., 40.)

Our dear Lord calls this precept of charity especially *his own* commandment. "This is *my* commandment, that you love one another." He calls it *his* commandment, to teach us that this precept of charity is the foundation of all his heavenly doctrines, the sole object of his coming into this world, the sole aim of all his labors and sufferings. "I have come," he says, "to cast fire upon the earth (the fire of charity), and what will I but that it be enkindled." (Luke, xii., 49.)

Not satisfied with calling the precept of charity his own commandment, our dear Saviour calls it also a *new* commandment. "I give you," he says, "a new command-

ment." (John, xiii., 34.) But how is it new? Is not the precept of charity as old as the world? True; the precept of charity, in general, and in a certain sense, is as ancient as the world. The law of charity is a law of nature. It is a law engraven on the heart of every man, that he must act towards others as he would wish that they should act towards him. But this law of nature was more or less obscured by the passions of men. Hence christian charity, or that kind of charity which Jesus Christ commands, is a new commandment. It is new as to the spirit and perfection with which it is to be observed. We are to love one another as Jesus Christ has loved us. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." (John, xiii., 34.) I have given you my entire self, all that I am and all that I have. I am now going to sacrifice my life on the cross for you and all men. I wish you to follow my example and to love one another with true, with divine, that is with a *universal*, love. My love is not limited by sympathies and aversions, by natural inclinations and antipathies, by ingratitude and hatred. My heart embraces all mankind. As I am infinite goodness itself, it is my pleasure to do good to every man who is my image, my subject, my work, and my child. There is no one whom this love of mine does not overshadow; there is no one to whom I have not given all that is necessary for his temporal welfare; no one whom I have not enlightened by my inspirations, assisted by my grace. I have given to every one an angel to watch over him. I desire the salvation of all. I have given to each one the means of salvation. I have given to each one the sacraments of my Church. I have created each one for heaven. I gave you an example of this charity

in the parable of the good Samaritan. The Samaritan did not ask the wounded man what country he was from—whether he was a Greek or a barbarian. He did not wait for others to perform the duties of charity towards the poor stranger. He did not say: "It is the duty of priests and Levites to take care of this man; I can do nothing for him." He did not offer his ignorance of medicine as an excuse for abandoning the wounded man. He did not excuse himself on account of the danger he would incur of falling into the hands of the robbers if he delayed. He did not spare his wine and oil. He placed the sick man on his horse, and walked himself. He took the wounded man to an inn and defrayed all his expenses there. It is thus you must love all men, without exception. You must exclude no one from your love. You must do good to the most wretched and forsaken.

"If you love one another," says Jesus, "all men will know that you are my disciples, and that I was sent by my heavenly Father." (John, xiii., 35.) "And not for them (the apostles) alone do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in me, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" (John, xvii., 20, 21.)

When St. Pachomius was yet a heathen soldier and noticed the cheerfulness with which the inhabitants of a certain place assisted the soldiers in their distress, he asked who those persons were who so cheerfully assisted others. He was answered that they were Christians whose religion obliged them to assist every one to the best of their power. This answer made a deep impression upon Pachomius. He felt convinced that a religion which inspired

so universal and so disinterested a charity, must be divine, and he immediately became a Christian.

If we wish, then, to comply with the precept of charity, we must behold our neighbor in the heart of Jesus Christ. There we will find our neighbor, and Jesus loves him so much that he died for him. He, therefore, who fixes his eyes upon the heart of Jesus, cannot help loving his neighbor truly. He, on the contrary, who looks at his neighbor out of the heart of Jesus, runs the risk of loving him with neither pure nor constant love. If we love our neighbor in God, our love becomes only the more intense and more perfect. This motive ennobles our affections and transforms them from natural into supernatural, from human into divine, from temporal into eternal. Mere natural friendship does not last long, because its foundation is unsteady. At the first misunderstanding the mere natural cools and dies. But this does not happen in friendship which is founded in God, because its foundation is firm and solid. The bond of divine charity alone can keep our hearts united.

You will find men, void of divine charity, slaves of their passions, who affect, when it suits their purpose, great religious zeal and purity. They talk of "Philanthropy," and "Humanity," show great compassion for a lame horse, and give the cold shoulder to the houseless orphan. The hearts of such men are cold and insincere. They are often addicted to shameful secret crimes. By their bad example and their impious principles, they cause the ruin of thousands of souls.

See what secret societies do to entice unwary Catholics into the lodges. They promise them assistance in all their temporal necessities; they promise them work; promotion

to government offices, lucrative employment, and so on—but it is false, poisonous charity; it is but a bait thrown out to ensnare them—to rob them of their faith, of God, of heaven, and draw them into everlasting perdition: it is but a hellish malice under the cloak of charity. These secret societies are a device of satan who wishes to bring men to kneel down and worship him. “All these kingdoms and their glory will I give thee,” said the devil to our Saviour, “if falling down thou wilt adore me.” (Matt., iv., 8, 9.)

Now, though we are obliged to love all men as ourselves, yet we are not bound to love our neighbor more than ourselves; we are not obliged to prefer his welfare to our own. The only exception to this is when our neighbor is in extreme want and the good he possesses is of a higher order than ours. Now, the order of our spiritual and temporal goods is—1st the spiritual life of the soul—the life of grace; 2, the temporal life of the body; 3, our good name; 4, our wealth and temporal possessions. If our neighbor, then, is in extreme want, we are obliged to prefer our neighbor's spiritual salvation to our temporal life: his temporal life to our reputation, and his reputation to our wealth and temporal possessions. But we must bear in mind that we are thus bound only when our neighbor is in extreme want. If he is not in such necessity, we are not bound to prefer his welfare to our own, even though his good should be of a higher order than ours.

Should my neighbor, for instance, unjustly attempt to take my life, it is no sin for me to kill him, if I have no other way of saving my life; for, in such a case, I am allowed to prefer my temporal life to the spiritual life of my neighbor, for he is not obliged to kill me.

7. Who is our neighbor ?

All men are our neighbors.

By our neighbor we are not to understand merely our parents, our friends, our benefactors, our fellow-citizens, or those who profess the same faith with us ; our *neighbor* means all men, without exception of persons, or distinction of creed ; strangers as well as fellow-country-men ; heretics, Jews, and idolators as well as Catholics, our enemies as well as our friends. If the love of God the Holy Ghost is in us, it will make us love all men—Jews, Greeks, barbarians, Christians, pagans, infidels, heretics ; the just and sinners ; parents and strangers ; friends and enemies ; benefactors and malefactors. He who excludes but one man from his love shows that he loves no one with true christian charity, for the motives of charity are always the same. If, for God's sake I love him who pleases me, I must also, for God's sake, love him who displeases me ; for both are the creatures of God, made in his image ; both are bought with his blood, both are called to his eternal glory.

Our dear Lord, therefore, will despise us, if we despise our fellow-men. He will hate us, if we hate them. He will afflict us, if we afflict them. On the contrary, he will excuse us, if we excuse our fellow-men. He will support us, if we support them. He will pardon us, if we pardon them. In a word, he will treat us, as we treat them. We shall be judged by the charity which we have shown to our neighbor. "He that loveth not, abideth in death," that is in a state of damnation. (1 John, iii., 14.) "But he in whom charity abides, abideth in God, and God in him." (1 John, iv., 16.) "Charity is the fulfilment of the law." (Rom., xiii., 10.) Ought we, then, to

have the same charity for all men without distinction ? I answer, we should love our neighbor as God loves him. Now God loves all men far more than we can understand ; but he does not love all with the same degree of love. As he is a Being of infinite perfection, he loves himself with infinite love. Next to himself he loves most those who most resemble him and who are most intimately united to him. Out of a thousand likenesses every one prefers that which is the most correct. In like manner out of a thousand souls God loves that one most, which is nearest to him in perfection. God's love for men, then, is in proportion to their merit and their virtue. Now this love of God for our neighbor should be our model. Although he has commanded us to love all men, yet he does not require us to love all alike. The holier a man is, the more we should love him.

We ought to have a love of preference for those in the highest degree of sanctity. We also owe a special love to our parents. In every act a just proportion must be observed between the object and the agent. The nature of the act, whether good or bad, proceeds from the object, and its intensity from the agent. Now those who are more advanced in virtue than our parents, and consequently partake more abundantly of the gifts of God, have according to the principles of perfect charity a greater claim on our love than even our parents. But we naturally love our parents more intensely, for both grace and nature inspire us with more affection and sympathy for them. The ties uniting us to them are not only closer but also more indissoluble ; in fact death alone can dissolve them. It is, therefore, not contrary to true charity to be more strongly attached to our parents than to others who may be even more perfect.

Ought we to love our relatives more than those who are united to us by the ties of friendship, of society, profession, and temporal affairs? There is no union more lasting and indissoluble than that of blood-relationship. All who are united by such ties derive their existence from the same source. All other ties and associations are but accidental and transitory: such, for instance, are the relations of citizens with regard to their habitation, their temporal and civil affairs; the relations of merchants in business and commerce; and the friendship of soldiers who live in the same camp and the same barracks. The ties of blood-relationship on the contrary are the foundation of society. They hold together families, generations, and the entire nation. They survive the dissolution of all other associations, and are well-nigh imperishable.

If we owe a love of preference to our parents and relatives on account of the ties of nature, we owe also a special love to our country. The love of our native country is paramount to all other natural affections. The prosperity and independence of our native land are to be preferred even to the welfare of parents or kindred, says St. Thomas Aquinas. There are other degrees of charity between parents and children, husband and wife. St. Ambrose says that man should love God first, then his parents, then his children, and finally his relatives.

As to our love for father and mother, St. Jerome says that after God, who is our common and eternal Father, we ought to love our father more than our mother. As to the husband he ought to have more affection for his wife than for his parents: for the Apostle says that the husband should love his wife as his own flesh. "They are not now two, but one flesh." (Matt., xix., 6.) Never-

theless according to the supernatural order and principle of charity, he ought to have more *veneration* for his parents than even for his wife. The same principle applies to the duties and sentiments of the wife.

Are we also obliged to love sinners ?

We have already remarked that the love of God for all men must be the model of our love for them. Now, God not only loves the just but also sinners. It is true, he hates and detests their sins, because he is offended by them ; but he loves the sinner, because he created him, redeemed him, and has the greatest desire to see himself united to him by grace here below and by glory in heaven. This love of God for sinners, we say, must be the model of our love for them. We must hate and detest the sins of our neighbor, because they make him an enemy of God ; but we must love that sinful neighbor, because, as long as he is a pilgrim on earth, he is capable of meriting eternal happiness. How many saints are now in heaven who, for several years, were great sinners, but are now glorifying God in heaven throughout all eternity for his goodness and mercy to them ? Witness St. Augustine, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Margaret of Cortona, and so many others, who from great sinners became very great saints in the Church of God. If we read that the prophets and saints wished for the punishment of the wicked ("Let the wicked be thrown into hell, all the nations that forget God : " Ps., ix., 18.) it was rather through a desire of seeing divine justice triumph over impiety and iniquity ; but they did not wish the eternal damnation of sinners ; for we should always have compassion for sinners, says St. Thomas, unless they publicly renounce or reject the true faith, and wish to die in the state of impenitence.

Should we have charity for the demons or evil spirits ? God speaks through the prophet Isaias (Xviii., 18) : “ Your league with death shall be abolished, and your covenant with hell shall not subsist.” The demons or evil spirits are the inhabitants of hell and the instruments of eternal death. Now, as charity is the perfection of peace and the seal of the divine covenant, we can have no charity for the demons, as such charity would be contrary to divine justice. However, in the same way that we have compassion for irrational creatures, because their preservation tends to the glory of God and the general utility of man ; so we may have the same sentiments with regard to the evil spirits as being a portion of the universal creation and wish that these evil spirits should be preserved in their natural state for the glory of the divine Majesty.

8. Are we also obliged to love our enemies ?

Yes; for Jesus Christ says : “ I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.” (Matt., v., 44.)

To love those who love us and are kind to us, is the love of heathens. “ If you love them that love you,” says our Saviour, “ what reward shall you have ? Do not even the publicans the same ? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more ? Do not also the heathens the same ? ” (Matt., v., 46.) But to love those who hate us, calumniate and persecute us, is the love of true Christians. Now this love is strictly commanded by our Lord. “ You have heard,” said he, “ that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy ; but I say to you, love your enemies, do good to

them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt., v., 43.)

The law of Jesus Christ is a law of love. He wishes that all, even our enemies, should love us. In like manner he commands us to love even those who hate us and wish us evil. The spirit of enmity is in itself something bad and detestable. Hence we are not commanded to love that spirit. We are obliged to love human nature and the supernatural gifts that may be in our enemies. This love is of strict obligation, and not to have this love is not to have perfect charity. Though our neighbor may be our enemy, yet he is a child of God, and perhaps the object of his tender mercy and compassion. If we truly love a person, we also love his children and friends, though they may be our enemies.

Now the precept of loving our enemies, obliges us to love them with internal as well as with external love, that is, we must love them with sincere love of the heart, by formal acts of love, and show them all the ordinary signs of benevolence and compassion which we show to a friend, especially when we see them in distress, or their life and property in danger. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him something to eat; if thirsty, give him to drink." (Prov., xxv., 21.) We are obliged to salute him when he salutes us. If he is a person whose rank is higher than ours, it is our duty to salute him before he salutes us; and if, without a grievous inconvenience, we can salute first even an equal, and thereby free him from the hatred which he bears us, we are obliged to salute him first.

However, we are not obliged to have such sentiments of affection for an enemy as we have for parents; for sentiments of affection are a voluntary and absolute per-

fection, but not a precept of charity. Hence charity does not oblige us to give any signs of particular esteem and affection to our enemies; it obliges us merely to practise benevolence and compassion towards them, especially when we see them in spiritual or temporal distress. The precept of charity requires no more, says St. Thomas.

Now, the love of enemies is difficult to human nature. Hence our dear Saviour has taught us by his example the love of enemies. When hanging on the cross, Jesus Christ was exposed to the gaze of a blasphemous multitude. No complaint, however, escaped his lips. He uttered not a word until, moved with tender compassion for his enemies, he cried out: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The blood of Abel demanded vengeance. The blood of Jesus cried only for mercy and grace for those who shed it. His enemies had accused him falsely, judged him through passion, condemned him through malice, and crucified him between two thieves: they insulted his mercy, and in spite of all this, Jesus excuses their sin, diminishes their malice, and assumes the office of advocate for them. He forgets his own bitter anguish to think of those who persecuted him unto death. Their guilt afflicted him more than all the torments he endured.

Now, he wishes us to imitate his example. "I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also." (John, xiii. 15.) He promises us the forgiveness of our sins, if we imitate his example. "Forgive," he says, "and you shall be forgiven." (Luke, vi., 37.) In these words, our Lord has made a sort of contract or agreement with us. If you forgive, he says, I pledge you my divine word that I will show you mercy: I will receive you into my heavenly kingdom.

Now this agreement between God and ourselves is very consoling. We have the absolute certainty that, if we forgive others, God will forgive us. God himself has said this, and he cannot break his word: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." We can then say confidently when we appear before the judgement-seat of God: "O Lord, I have kept my part of the agreement; I have forgiven all my enemies, do thou also now forgive me." If we, therefore, truly forgive our enemies, we may be perfectly certain of forgiveness.

This certainty of pardon is beyond all doubt. Hence a great saint used to say, that we ought to desire, nay, that we even ought to buy, insults and injuries with silver and gold, because if we forgive our enemies God will certainly forgive us. Most touching is what Father Avila relates of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. One day this saint prayed to God to give great graces to all those who had in any way injured her; nay, to give the greatest graces to those who had injured her most. After this prayer, our Lord Jesus Christ said to her: "My daughter, never in your life did you make a prayer more pleasing to me than the one which you have just said for your enemies. On account of this prayer, I forgive not only all your sins but even all temporal punishments due to them."

To love our enemies, to pray for them, to do good to them, is, no doubt, an act of heroic charity—an act which is free from all self-love and self-interest. The insults, calumnies, and persecutions of our enemies relate directly to our own person. Now, to forgive them, nay even to ask God to forgive them also, is to renounce our claim to our right and honor, and thus to raise ourselves to the great dignity of the true children of God, to an unspeak-

ably sublime resemblance to his Divinity. Jesus Christ assures us of this great truth in these words: "If you pray for those who hate, calumniate, and persecute you, you will be the children of your heavenly Father who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust." (Matt., v., 45.) There is nothing more peculiar, nothing more honorable to our heavenly Father, than to have mercy and to spare, to do good to all his enemies, especially by giving them the grace of conversion that they may become his friends, his children and the heirs of his everlasting kingdom.

Now, by imitating his goodness in a point so much averse to human nature, we give him the greatest glory, and we do, at the same time, such violence to his tender and meek heart as to cause him, not only to forgive the sins of our enemies, but even to constrain him to grant all our prayers, because he wishes to be far more indulgent, far more merciful, and far more liberal than it is possible for us ever to be. Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints furnish us with most striking examples as a proof of this great and most consoling truth.

The greatest persecutor of St. Stephen was St. Paul the Apostle, before his conversion; for, according to St. Augustine, he threw stones at him by the hands of all those whose clothes he was guarding. What made him, from being a persecutor of the Church, become her greatest Apostle and Doctor? It was the prayer of St. Stephen, "for, had he not prayed," says St. Augustine, "the Church would not have gained this Apostle." St. Mary Oigni, whilst in a rapture, saw how our Lord presented St. Stephen with the soul of St. Paul, before his death, on account of the prayer which the former had offered for

him : she saw how St. Stephen received the soul of this Apostle, at the moment of his death, and how he presented it to our Lord saying : " Here, O Lord, I have the immense and most precious gift which Thou gavest me ; now I return it to Thee with great interest." * Ecomen is of opinion that on account of St. Stephen's prayer, not only St. Paul but many others most probably received the forgiveness of their sins and life everlasting.

Not long ago, quite an innocent person received a letter of twelve pages, containing the vilest, the most infamous, and most devilish calumnies. When she had read them she prayed : " Father, forgive them." A few days after, the writer of the calumnies, who had not been to confession for several years, became suddenly so dangerously sick that she could not help acknowledging that her sickness was a punishment for her calumnies. So she had another letter written in which she begged pardon of the person whom she had so maliciously calumniated, promising that, should she recover, she would come in person to ask her pardon. She sent for the priest and made a good confession. Two other persons, who had not been to confession for several years, and were instrumental in the invention of the calumnies, also entered into themselves, when they witnessed the excruciating pains of the writer of the calumnies. They, too, made a good confession and promised to ask pardon in person of the one whom they had calumniated with such devilish malice.

No doubt it requires an extraordinary grace to convert an obstinate sinner, one who resembles the devil in wickedness. Now, if God grants such a grace to the prayer of him who prays for his enemy, what great graces will

* Her Life, by Cardinal Vitriaco, lib. 2, chap. xi.

he not grant to him who, for his sake, forgives his enemy and even begs God to forgive him also and to bless him ?

We read in the life of St. John Gualbertus, that he one day met the murderer of his only brother in a very narrow street. The murderer greatly feared that John would take revenge on him, and, as he saw no possibility of escape, he fell on his knees and asked forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ, who, when hanging on the cross, forgave his murderers and prayed for them. John forgave him at once and embraced him as one of his best friends. Afterwards he went to a church, and prayed there before a crucifix. Oh ! how powerful was his prayer now with our Lord ! Whilst praying he saw how our Lord bowed his head towards him, thanking him, as it were, for having forgiven so great an offence. At the same time he felt a most extraordinary change in his soul. He renounced the world and became the founder of a religious Order. Let us rest assured that Almighty God will be just as generous towards us as he was towards this saint, if we are as generous as he was in forgiving our neighbor.

An extraordinary grace, such as the thorough change of the heart, is attached to the performance of an heroic, virtuous act. Now, when God furnishes us with the occasion of practising such an act, we either neglect the opportunity altogether, or profit by it only in a very imperfect manner. Hence such an extraordinary grace as changes us into saints, is withheld from us ; our want of generosity makes us unworthy of it. You have been treated very unjustly and uncharitably by one of your neighbors. Now, you forgive your neighbor ; but no sooner is the name of that neighbor mentioned in conversation than you relate all the wrong you have suffered from him. You thus show

that your forgiveness is not a complete, heartfelt forgiveness; it is not such a one, to which God has attached the extraordinary grace of a full remission of all your sins and the temporal punishment due to them—the extraordinary grace of a thorough change of your heart. You thus remain imperfect, and will perhaps for your whole life.

Generous souls act very differently. St. Ambrose procured for an assassin, who had made an attempt on his life, a pension sufficient for a comfortable maintenance. St. Catharine of Sienna performed the office of servant for a woman who had endeavored to destroy her good name. A relative of St. John the Almoner, who had been grossly insulted by an innkeeper in Alexandria, laid his complaint before the saint. St. John said to him: "As this publican has been so very insolent, I will teach him his duties. I will treat him so as to excite the wonder of the whole city." Now what did the saint do? He ordered his steward never afterwards to exact the yearly rent which the innkeeper had to pay him. Such was the revenge which the saint took, and which truly excited the wonder of the whole city. It is thus that the saints sought revenge, and it is thus that they became saints.

But here some one might say: "I have no opportunity to practise acts of heroic charity towards enemies, for the simple reason that I have no enemies. How can I then make myself worthy of graces so extraordinary as to change one into a saint." In this case say to God: "Had I, O Lord, a thousand enemies, I would, for thy sake, forgive them all, love them and pray for them." Thus you will practise, at least in desire, the highest degree of charity, and our Lord will take the will for the deed.

But remember also that if you have no opportunity to practise this degree of charity in reality, you will always find plenty of opportunities to practise the degree of charity next to the highest, which consists in bearing with your neighbor's whims, weaknesses, faults of character, disagreeable manners, and all the little annoyances which he may cause you. The practice of this kind of charity will also move our Lord to grant you extraordinary graces. "I know," says St. Francis de Sales, "that frequent little vexations and annoyances are often more disagreeable than great ones, and that it often seems harder to bear with the inmates of the house than with strangers; but I know also that our victory in these little annoyances, is often more pleasing to God than many apparently brilliant victories, which are more glorious in the eyes of worldings. For this reason, I admire the meekness with which the great St. Charles Borromeo suffered, for a long time, the fault-finding attacks which a great preacher uttered against him from the pulpit, far more than all his patience under the assaults which he received from others. O Lord, when shall we be so far advanced in perfection as to bear with our fellow-men, with a truly strong love and affection.

We read in Holy Scripture that Moses was always the same kind and meek father to the Jewish people in the desert in spite of their frequent murmurs, reproaches, rebellion, and apostasy. His revenge was to pour forth fervent prayers to God for their spiritual and temporal welfare. Now, when such meek and forbearing charity is praying, God is forced, as it were, to listen to such a prayer and to hear it. Hence he could not punish the Jewish people for their sins, so long as Moses interceded for them and asked him to pardon them.

Now, if on the one hand, it is certain that God, if we forgive our enemies and do good to them, forgives us, also graciously listens to our prayers, and grants extraordinary graces, both for the conversion of our enemies and for our own spiritual advancement, it is, on the other hand, just as certain that God will neither forgive us, nor listen to our prayers, nor accept our gifts, if we do not forgive our enemies. "And when you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man." (Mark, xi., 25.) "Leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift." (Matt., v., 23.)

In these words, our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that our prayers will not be heard by his heavenly father as long as we entertain in our hearts feelings of hatred towards any of our fellow-men. If you have recourse to prayer, he says, and at the same time have aught against any man, go first and be reconciled to your brother, or at least forgive him from the bottom of your heart, and then come and offer up your prayers or any other good work, otherwise I will not listen to you. Our dear Lord has made every man his representative on earth, by creating him according to his own image and likeness; he has redeemed all men with his most precious blood; he has, therefore, declared that whatever we do to the least of our fellow-men for his sake, we do it to him. Now, by commanding us to love our enemies, to do good to those that hate us, and to pray for those that persecute and calumniate us (Matt. v., 44.), he asks of us to give to him, in the person of his representatives, that which we can give so easily. It is great presumption to ask for his gifts and favors, without being willing, on our part, to

give him what he requires of us in all justice. To refuse this request of our Lord is, indeed, on our part, great injustice. We ask of him the greatest gifts: such as the pardon of innumerable and most grievous offences, final perseverance, deliverance from hell, everlasting glory, and so many other countless favors for body and soul. What he asks of us is little or nothing compared with his graces. I will give you, then he says, what I can, if you give me what you can. But if you do not give me what you can, neither will I give you anything. "If you will not forgive, neither will your father who is in heaven forgive your sins." (Mark, xi., 26.) It is but just that God should have no compassion on him who has no compassion on his neighbor. "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy," says St. James. (Chap., ii., 13.) "With what face," says St. Augustine, "can he ask forgiveness, who refuses to obey God's command to forgive others."

Sapricius and Nicephorus were intimate friends; the former was a priest, the latter a layman. Their holy friendship lasted many years, till unfortunately it was at last broken by a foolish quarrel. Nicephorus soon repented, went to the friends of Sapricius and begged them to intercede for him. But in vain; Sapricius would not forgive him. Nicephorus then went himself, fell on his knees before Sapricius, and conjured him to pardon him. But the priest was obstinate; he refused to forgive. This occurred during the persecution of the Emperor Valerian. Sapricius was accused of being a Christian, arrested and brought before the judge. He was put to the torture; he bore his sufferings with heroic constancy; he was finally condemned to be beheaded.

On his way to the place of execution, Nicephorus meets him, casts himself at his feet, and cries out with tears, "O martyr of Jesus Christ, forgive me, I am sorry for having offended thee!" He continued thus to implore Sapricius till they came to the place of execution: but all in vain, Sapricius will not forgive! Finally, the priest mounted the scaffold—the head-man orders him to kneel down, to receive the fatal blow; at this awful moment his courage fails, the terror of death seizes him. He turns traitor, renounces his holy faith and sacrifices to the false gods! Nicephorus grieved by this cowardly apostasy and inspired by the Holy Ghost, proclaims aloud, that he is a Christian, he is beheaded on the spot and thus received the glorious crown that Sapricius lost by his unforgiving hatred. (Acta Mart., A. D. 300.)

There is one who has been greatly insulted by his neighbor. On being required to forgive him, he replies: "I will indeed forgive the insult, but I think it is well that evil-doers should be punished." St. Alphonsus answers: "The precept of loving our enemies forbids us to entertain sentiments of revenge against our enemies. We are bound to overcome evil by good. 'Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens.' (Levi., xix.) He who seeks revenge for an insult received, is in the state of mortal sin. Now, if a person says, 'I will indeed forgive the injury, but I think it is well that evil-doers should be punished,' I can hardly see how such a person is free from the desire of revenge, and, therefore, I would hesitate to absolve him, unless there are other just causes to excuse him."

However, to rejoice at the temporal misfortune of an enemy is no violation of the precept of charity, if we be-

lieve that such a misfortune will contribute towards the salvation of others; nor is it wrong to be sorry for the temporal prosperity of an enemy if we have good reason to believe that he will use his prosperity to oppress the poor, and lead many into perdition. How strange is it not, to see sometimes pious persons overcome by the hellish demon of hatred and revenge. There is a woman, who was once a model of piety. She went regularly to the sacraments, even gave alms to the poor, was liberal to the Church, and an object of joy to angels and men; but unfortunately she took offence at some trifle. The demon of hatred entered her heart. She no longer receives the sacraments, or if she does it is only to profane the sacraments, to eat and drink damnation, for she will not forgive her neighbor; she still bears hatred in her heart.

A few years ago there was a poor man lying sick in one of the public hospitals of a certain city. He was good and pious, received communion every month, and spent the greater part of his time in reading the lives of the saints and other good books. Now, unfortunately for him, it happened that, from some slight provocation, he received a great dislike to a fellow-patient in the same ward. As the unhappy man did not banish this temptation, his dislike soon became a devilish hatred. Sometimes, in his fury, he allowed himself to be so overcome by the demon of hatred that he would make use of the vilest language and throw at his companion whatever came to hand. One day the priest told him publicly that he would be obliged to refuse him the sacraments, even on his death-bed, if he did not give up his hatred. Not long after this unhappy man roused the ward at midnight by the most pitiful moans. All hastened to his bedside.

There he was—struggling desperately with smothered cries, as if he wished to rid himself of one who was choking him. He was unable to speak, and in a few moments he was a corpse. He died without the sacraments, without being reconciled to his neighbor—he died with the devil of hatred still lurking in his heart. But one will say perhaps: “I will forgive that person; I do not wish him any harm, but I do not want to see him or speak to him any more. I do not wish to have any thing to do with him any longer.”

You say that you forgive that person who has injured you, that you do not wish him any harm; but that you do not wish to see him or speak to him any more! And with that of course, you are satisfied: you go confidently to confession and communion. You consider yourself a good christian. You do not even think of accusing yourself in confession of any want of charity; and should the confessor, through love for your soul, make any inquiries about the matter, you answer perhaps with a righteous air, that you have done your duty, that you cannot do more than forgive him.

Now I must say to you that you have not forgiven that person. You hate him still, and therefore, you are still living in sin, still an enemy of God.

Do you shun the society of those whom you love? Now if you really loved that person who has injured you, would you be so very careful to avoid his company?

But you will say: “O indeed I forgive him and love him, but I avoid him for peace’ sake, I do not wish to quarrel with him. The very sight of him makes my heart’s blood boil.” What! You say that you forgive that person and love him! Does then the sight of one

whom you love make your heart's blood boil ? You say that you forgive him. You mean to say, no doubt, that you do not wish him any harm. But mark well, that is not enough ; you must love him and love him truly. You must do good to your enemy. You must prove by your actions as well as by your words that you really forgive him. Unless you truly forgive and are forbearing with your neighbor, our dear Saviour will say to you in the hour of death: " I have loved you with an eternal charity, and I still love you, because you are my work ; but I can neither see nor speak to you. A separation must take place. Depart from me."

There is another ; he says : " If I offer to make friends with that woman, she will think me mean-spirited, and only despise me the more for it."

Well suppose she does despise you, will that harm you ? Whose esteem should you value most. God's or hers ?

But is it really true that she will think you mean spirited, if you offer to make friends with her ? I do not believe it. It is a suggestion of the devil. No ; the Holy Ghost himself assures us that " A mild answer turneth away wrath." (Prov., xv., 1.) There is something good in the heart of every one yet living on earth. It may indeed be buried far down in the soul, but a meek forgiving spirit will surely bring it to the surface, just as the warm sunshine brings up the flowers from beneath the frozen ground. This is, as St. Paul tells us, the only revenge which it is lawful for a christian to take. " If," he says, " thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him to drink ; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Rom., xii., 20.) If you treat your enemy with kindness, if you return good for evil, you will gain him gradually, and at last you will win his heart.

The brave Hungarian, Count Peter Szapary, was taken prisoner by the Turks, brought to Ofen, and dragged before Hamsa Bey. The cruel Turk rejoiced to see his dreaded enemy at length in his power; he loaded him with insult, condemned him to receive 100 blows on the soles of his feet, then to be chained hand and foot, and cast into prison. It was a dark, loathsome, subterranean dungeon. The prisoner's bed was only mouldy straw; his food was so wretched that he was soon reduced to the point of death. But the cruel Pasha did not wish him to die. He desired first to torture his prisoner, and then receive a heavy ransom for him. He ordered the prisoner to be cared for until he was restored to health; then, condemned him to work in the kitchen. One day Hamsa Bey asked him in mockery, how he felt. Szapary answered not a word, but turned his back upon the tyrant. At this the Pasha was so enraged that he ordered the brave nobleman to be harnessed to a plough and to till a neighboring field, with another unhappy christian, exposed to the strokes of the lash and the jeers of the populace. Finally after three long years of cruel martyrdom, Szapary was exchanged for a wealthy Aga, who had been taken prisoner by the Hungarians.

Szapary returned home in a most pitiable condition. He was worn to a skeleton and scarcely able to stand. It was a long time before he was again restored to health. Some years after, Sept. 2, 1686, Ofen was captured by the christians and Hamsa Bey taken prisoner. The Duke of Lorraine gave him over into the hands of Szapary, to do with him whatever he thought proper. A servant of Szapary went in haste to the Turk to announce to him the fact. Some time after Szapary went to the

prison to visit his cruel enemy. "Dost thou know me?" he asked; "I am Szapary. Thou art now in my power." "I know it," answered the Turk sullenly; "now is your time for vengeance." "Very well, I shall take the revenge of a christian. I now restore you to freedom, unconditionally, and even without ransom." The Turk smiles contemptuously. He did not believe such noble conduct possible.

"I am a christian," continued Szapary; "my religion commands me to forgive my enemies, and to return good for evil." He then ordered the chains of his enemy to be struck off and restored him to liberty for "the sake of *Him* who was nailed to the cross." The hardened Turk was completely overcome by this extraordinary generosity. He fell writhing at the feet of Szapary. "Your kindness comes too late," he shrieked; "I have taken poison to escape the tortures which I expected. I now curse myself and my cruelty towards you. I crave your forgiveness. I wish at least to die a christian, since the christian religion teaches so sublime a virtue!"—Skilful physicians were speedily called, but it was too late. Hamsa Bey was baptized, and Szapary stood as his godfather. (Hungari.)

There is another. He says: "I cannot forgive that person. It is too much to expect from human nature. How can I love a person who has belied me, and calumniated me to all my neighbors?"

You say that you cannot love that person. Tell me, then, does the gospel make any exception? Does it say that you need not love those that belie you? On the contrary, our Lord says: "Pray for those who calumniate you."

You say, it is too hard to forgive that person. But supposing it is very hard, is that any reason why you should not do it? Are you not a christian? Is not the way to heaven, a way of suffering and self-denial? "If any one wishes to be my disciple," says Jesus Christ, "let him deny himself." It may be expecting too much from poor human nature to love your enemies, but it is not expecting too much from the grace of God; for, with the assistance of his grace, you can do all things, as St. Paul assures us.

St. Francis de Sales relates that, when he was studying in Padua, some of the students were in the bad habit of going about in the city at night, challenging the people, and firing upon them if no reply was made. One night it happened that a student was challenged and killed for refusing to answer. The murderer took refuge with a good widow, whose son was one of his most intimate friends. She harbored and concealed him very carefully. A few moments after, she received the harrowing news that her son had just been killed. The truth flashed at once upon her mind, and going forthwith to the closet wherein she hid the murderer of her son, she thus addressed him: "Alas! what had my son done to you that you should kill him so cruelly?" The culprit, overwhelmed by the atrocity of his crime and the remembrance of the former friendship, burst into tears and tore the hair from his head. Instead of begging pardon of the desolate mother, he threw himself on his knees before her, entreating her to deliver him up that he might publicly atone for so atrocious a crime. The heroic woman was satisfied with these feelings of true repentance, and instead of wishing for revenge, she desired only that the murderer of her son

might live and secure God's pardon. Accordingly she had him taken to a place of security. Some time after, the soul of the murdered youth appeared to his merciful mother and told her that God had shortened his time of punishment in purgatory because she had so generously forgiven his murderer.

"But everybody tells me that I shall be a fool, if I forgive that person after the way that he has treated me!"

Well, do you then intend to be guided by the maxims of the world? Remember you cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve Jesus Christ and the world. The world, of course, will tell you: "Fight for your right. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. If you cannot punish him by law, then take the law into your own hands. Revenge is sweet." Tell me, then, is this your standard of morality? This may do very well for heathens, but it will not do for christians. No; Jesus Christ says: "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other." (Matt. v., 39.) The motive of your action must be in your own soul, and not in the conduct of others. Men misrepresent you? What matters it? God is your law-giver and your judge.

"But there are so many wicked people in the world!" Well, act so that they may become useful to you. If there were no wicked people how could you grow in the virtues of charity and patience.

"But men are so thankless!" Then imitate nature which gives to man bountifully and hopes for nothing in return.

"But they insult you." Remember that an insult degrades only him who gives it.

"But they slander you!" Thank God that your ene-

mies, to blacken your character, must have recourse to lies.

“But the shame of being treated thus!” Has then a just man any thing to be ashamed of?

“But I will lose my character, every one will think me guilty, I will be disgraced forever, if I speak to that man, that woman!” What! Look then at Jesus Christ, praying for his enemies? Then he is the most degraded of men; for he forgives thousands of men every day!

Jesus Christ forgives his enemies. Now, do you not think it is an honor to resemble your God and your Redeemer? Is it not true nobility, is it not heroic, to raise yourself above all vulgar prejudices, and to forgive your enemies? Is it not God-like? The heathens were astonished at the charity with which the first christians forgave their enemies. Nay even at the present day the most selfish and degraded hearts cannot help admiring that man who forgives his enemies who returns good for evil.

Not long ago it happened, during a certain mission, that some prominent members of the community, who had been at enmity, were reconciled. The two enemies passing on opposite sides of the street crossed at the same moment and embraced each other in the middle of the street. Each one was eager to make the first advance; and so marked was the fact, that every one in town spoke of it. It was a source of general edification. It revived in the place the old heathen cry about the early christians: “Ah! see how these christians love one another!”

“But that man, that woman is an ungrateful creature! No one can live with him.” Well, look again at our Lord. Were not his enemies ungrateful? Were they

not full of hatred and malice ? And yet he forgave them and prayed for them.

“But he has done me too great an injury. I cannot forgive him.” What! Have you suffered more than our Lord has suffered. He is God, and you are after all but a weak, sinful man. Again, is the injury done to you greater than any of those you have offered to God ? Why, then should you not be willing to remit a small debt in order that God may remit your large debt ? “Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt because thou besoughtest me, Shouldst not thou, then, have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee ?” (Matt. xviii., 32.)

Now, who are those Catholics who make such objections to the love of enemies and to the practice of doing good to them ? Generally speaking, they are those who are not in the habit of making frequent acts of the love of their neighbor. We grow in virtue by practising it. Those, therefore, who but seldom make special acts of the love of their enemies, find it very difficult to practise it when the occasion for its practice is presented to them. They easily give way to their feelings of hatred, and are apt to die with them.

Two friends had the misfortune to quarrel about some trifle and from that moment became deadly enemies. This hatred lasted for several years. At last one of them fell sick. As the illness became serious, the priest was sent for. He came and told the dying man that God would not forgive him until he would first forgive his enemy. The dying man offered to forgive, and the priest, at his request, heard his confession. His enemy was sent for. He came : the two were reconciled, at least to all appear-

ances. Unfortunately, as the one sent for was leaving the sick man's room, he said : " Ah, the coward ! he sent for me, because he is afraid ! " When the dying man heard the remark, all his old hatred revived. " No," cried he in a rage ; " I am not afraid, and to show you now that I am not, I tell you I hate you as much as ever ! Begone ! May I never see your face again " Scarcely had he uttered these words when he fell back and died ! Think of the meeting of these two enemies in hell.

In order that we may escape a similar misfortune, let us adopt the following means :

1. When saying the Lord's Prayer, let us say, with great fervor and with true sincerity, the words : " And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," earnestly wishing that God may forgive our enemies and bless them with spiritual and temporal goods.

2. Let us accustom ourselves to banish all wilful feelings of hatred and rancor as soon as they arise in our hearts, by saying some short but fervent prayer for those against whom those uncharitable feelings arise in our soul.

3. Let us do good to our enemies whenever we can.

4. Let us never speak against those who have hurt or ill-treated us.

5. As St. Stephen has, in many instances, proved to be a powerful intercessor and patron for all those who wish to convert not only their enemies but also other obstinate sinners, let us often invoke him, that he may obtain for us the grace to love our enemies as truly and sincerely as he loved and prayed for his.

In a certain city of Spain, two of the principal inhabitants bore a mortal hatred to each other, and thereby divided the whole into two hostile parties. The streets

were often the scene of bloody encounters and ruthless murders. The bishop of the place and even the king himself had tried to put an end to these disgraceful feuds ; but in vain. At last it was resolved to give a mission in the place. The missionaries came. When they heard of the two hostile parties, they resolved to erect in the church an altar in honor of the great martyr St. Stephen, in order to obtain, through his intercession, the grace of reconciliation of the two hostile parties.

So in the opening sermon, one of the missionaries told the people that he had looked in vain in their city for an altar erected to the great martyr St. Stephen. "Now my brethren," continued he, "we wish to supply the defect. We wish to erect in this church an altar to the first christian martyr. You must aid us in this good work. You must especially procure us a beautiful picture of St. Stephen, for we do not know where to find one. Whoever will get this picture for us will have a special share in the graces and indulgences of the mission." The missionary then spoke of the importance of saving their immortal souls.

Scarcely had the missionary finished his sermon, when one of the ring-leaders who had been greatly affected by his words came to him and said : "Reverend Father, there is a very beautiful picture of St. Stephen in town ; but it belongs to my enemy. If you send somebody to him, perhaps he will lend it to you for the altar." "Excellent," said the missionary ; "I shall call on him immediately, but I want you to accompany me." "I?" said the man surprised ; "why, this is impossible ! He is a bitter enemy. He will not only insult me, but your reverence also." "Do not fear," said the priest ; "come with me, you

shall be welcome. This is clearly the work of God."

They went together to the house of the other ring-leader. They were kindly received. "We intend," said the priest, addressing him, "to erect an altar in honor of St. Stephen. I have heard, that you have a beautiful picture of the Saint, and I have come to request you to lend it to us during the mission." "Most willingly," answered the ring-leader. "I will not only lend it to you, I will bring it to the church myself, and this gentleman," pointing to his old enemy, "will have the kindness to help me to carry it." He immediately took down the picture and the two enemies bore it triumphantly through the streets to the church. The people, who beheld this miracle of grace, could hardly believe their eyes. The two factions, inspired by the good example of their leaders, now vied with each other in erecting and adorning the altar. In a few days every trace of ill-feeling had disappeared; the most perfect harmony reigned everywhere.

When the holy patriarch Jacob was on his death-bed, he sent a last message to his son Joseph. "Tell him," he said, "to forgive and forget, for my sake, the great malice of his brethren."

Our dear Saviour sends to you this message from the hard bed of the cross on which he died for us all: "I beg of you," he says, "to forgive and forget, for my sake, all the evil that your brother, that your enemy, has done you." Oh! go in spirit and kneel at the foot of the cross. Look upon the out-stretched arms of Jesus. Look upon his pale face. Look upon his sacred head crowned with thorns. Say to him like Saul: "Lord, what wilt thou that I should do?" Ah! listen to his voice. "O my child," he says, "my dying request is that you forgive

from your whole heart, that person who has injured you. But if you will be revenged, then come, here is my heart, glut your rage upon me, for I have become his surety; I have taken his sins upon myself."

9. For which class of persons should we always show a particular love?

For the poor, orphans, widows, and in general for all those who are in temporal or spiritual need.

The precept of charity obliges us to love our neighbor *internally* and *externally*. We must love our neighbor internally, that is, our love for him must come from our heart. Hence Pope Innocent XI. has condemned the proposition: "We are not bound to love our neighbor by an internal and formal act." It is, therefore, a sin to take pleasure in the misfortune of a neighbor, or to be grieved at his welfare. However, it is not wrong to take pleasure in the temporal misfortune of an obstinate sinner, if we have reason to believe that such a misfortune will induce him to amend his life and to oppress no longer the innocent. But it is a sin to delight in the death, or in any kind of misfortune of our neighbor on account of some temporal advantage that we derive from it. However, to delight in the cause of some temporal advantage, is one thing, and to delight in the advantage itself—the effect of the cause—is another. There are particular cases in which delight in the effect of a certain cause is no sin, whilst delight in the cause of the effect is a sin. It is, for instance, no sin to be delighted in the acquisition of property which comes to us after the death of a parent; but it is sinful to rejoice at his death. Hence Pope Innocent XI. has condemned the proposition (15 Prop.) which

asserts "that it is lawful for a son to rejoice at the death of his father, on account of the inheritance which will come to him."

We should nourish and increase the love of our heart for our neighbor, by making frequent acts of love. "Without such frequent acts of love," says St. Alphonsus, "we shall scarcely be able to practise the charity which we owe to our neighbor. We should make such an act of love at least once a month."

Another means to practise the love of our heart for our neighbor is to show compassion for those who are afflicted in soul and body. True compassion makes us feel the misfortunes of our neighbor as if they were our own.

We must also love our neighbor *externally*. Our life on earth is full of bodily and spiritual miseries. We are liable to meet with different reverses of fortune. How many have not been thrown from the summit of wealth into an abyss of poverty? Hence the precept of charity obliges us to be always willing to help all without exception, and assist them according to our ability. "Give to the good," says Holy Scripture, "and receive not a sinner" (Ecclus. xii., 5); that is: give nothing to the sinner to foster his iniquity, but relieve human nature, because it is the work of God. It may not always be in our power to assist every body in his wants; but charity does not oblige us to do what is beyond our means. If we cannot give to every one that is in distress, charity obliges us at least to be charitably disposed towards all our fellow-men, to show sincere compassion for them in their afflictions and misfortunes, and to say, at least, some prayers for them. True charity of the heart, says St. Paul, makes us "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." (Rom. xii., 15.)

10. How should we help the needy ?

By corporal, as well as by spiritual, works of mercy.

Our neighbor may be in bodily or spiritual want, or in both at the same time. To relieve him in the wants of the body is a corporal work of mercy, and to relieve him in his wants of the soul, is a spiritual work of mercy.

Now, as the soul is far superior to the body, a benefit conferred on the soul is, also, generally speaking, far superior to a benefit conferred on the body.

In some particular cases, however, a corporal work of mercy, may be better than a spiritual work of mercy, because it may be more necessary. For a man dying of hunger, a loaf of bread is better than an eloquent discourse or a salutary counsel.

In the practice of charity a certain order must be observed. This order is determined by the ties of kindred, of country, and of religion. Hence, when our nearest relations are in distress, nature and charity require us to relieve them in preference to others, because they are more closely united to us by the ties of kindred and friendship. If, however, one of our nearest relatives is only in *ordinary* want, and a stranger is in *extreme* want, we are bound by the precept of charity to relieve the stranger in preference to our nearest relative.

If a poor person is in *extreme* want and in danger of death by starvation we are obliged to relieve him with those means of ours which are not necessary for the preservation of our own life. If our neighbor is in *great* want, we are obliged to assist him with those means which we do not need for our condition of life.

11. Which are the corporal works of mercy ?

1, *To feed the hungry* ; 2, *to give drink to the thirsty* ; 3, *to clothe the naked* ; 4, *to harbor the harborless* ; 5, *to visit the sick* ; 6, *to visit the imprisoned* ; 7, *to bury the dead.*

God has made the rich depend on the poor, and the poor on the rich. The rich should take care of the poor, in order that the poor may take care of the rich. The misery of the poor is corporal. The misery of the rich is generally spiritual. The rich, therefore, should give corporal relief to the poor, in order to receive from them spiritual aid in turn. Without the assistance of the rich, the poor would die corporally. Without the prayers and blessings of the poor, the rich would die spiritually. Graces and chastisements are in the hands of the poor. When they implore mercy for him who aids them, God grants their prayers. When they demand justice against those who send them away empty, God also grants their prayers. "Son, defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor. For the prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul shall be heard: for he that made him will hear him." (Ecclus. iv., 1., 6.)

A rich man is in danger of losing his soul when he has not the prayers and blessings of the poor. In this world, the rich are the judges of the poor. In the world to come, the poor will be the judges of the rich. Those who have not the poor for their advocates, will not find grace with their judge. He who has the poor to plead for him, need not fear, but may rejoice. Those, therefore, who are able to give alms, are strictly obliged by the precept of charity, to relieve the needy, especially those who are ashamed to beg. "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in want, and shut up his heart from him, how

doth the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John iii., 17.) "Be you, therefore, perfect," says our Lord, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt v., 48.) In these words, Jesus Christ points out to us his heavenly Father as the model of our charity.

We cannot imitate the omnipotence of God by performing miracles. We cannot multiply bread, change water into wine, give sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, raise the dead to life, as Christ did. But no one has an excuse, if he does not imitate the charity of God. In his charity, God has created the heavens to give us light and rain; the fire to give us warmth; the air to preserve our life; the earth to give us various kinds of fruit; the sea to give us fish; the animals to give us food and clothing! In his charity, God the Father has given us his only-begotten Son, and his Son gave himself to us in the manger of Bethlehem, and upon the cross, and he gives himself still every day upon our altars, at each holy Mass, and in each holy Communion. God is almighty; but his omnipotence is not able to give us any thing greater as a proof of his unspeakable charity towards us. He has given heaven; he has given earth; he has given his kingdom, he has given himself; what more has he to give! Ah! how prodigal is he of himself!

Now, this charity of God is most wonderful for five reasons:

1. On account of the greatness and majesty of the lover and giver; for who can be greater and more exalted than the Lord of heaven and earth?

2. On account of the condition of those to whom he communicates Himself with all his gifts. By nature, they are but men, the lowest of rational beings; they are proud,

ungrateful, carnal sinners, prone to every evil; they are mortal, corrupt, vile creatures, doomed to become one day the food of worms. "What is man," exclaims the Psalmist, "that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii., 5.)

3. This charity of God is wonderful on account of the manifold and extraordinary gifts which he partly confers on men, and partly offers them. These are a rational soul, created in God's own Image and Likeness; His grace; the promise of glory; the protection of his Angels; the whole visible world; and finally, his own well-beloved Son. "For God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but might have life everlasting." (John iii., 16.)

4. This charity of God is wonderful on account of the end for which he confers all these benefits, that is, for the happiness of man, and not for his own happiness; for God does not expect to receive any advantage from man.

5. On account of the *manner* in which he communicates himself to men.

It is peculiar to God's infinite love to lower himself to what is vile and despicable, to heal what is ailing, to seek what is rejected, to exalt what is humble, and to pour out his riches where they are most needed. He often communicates himself even before he is asked, as he does in all the so-called preventing graces, by which he moves the soul to pray for subsequent ones. He even gives more than is asked. The good thief on the cross asked of our dear Saviour to remember him in his kingdom. But our Lord did more than that; he promised him paradise. "Amen, I say to you, this day

thou shalt be with me in Paradise." (Luke xxiii., 42.) God often lavishes his blessings upon those who abuse them, and are ungrateful for them; nay, he lavishes them even upon the worst of his enemies—upon infidels, atheists, heretics, blasphemers. "Be you the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." (Matt. v., 45.) This charity of our Lord must be our model. "Be, therefore, followers of God as most dear children, and walk in charity," says St. Paul. (Eph. v., 1, 2.)

We need no money to buy charity, nor is it necessary for us to cross seas and travel into far-distant countries to find it. Charity is natural to man. He who is destitute of it, is said to have *no heart*, and, therefore, nothing is more detestable in the eyes of men than want of charity. Every one should be able to say with Job: "I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor." (Xxix. 15.) The goods of this world were made for man's benefit. If they had eyes, feet, and understanding, they would go where they are most needed. Now, if a man has charity, he will lend to them his feet to go, his eyes to see, and his tongue to enquire, where they are needed.

Indeed, what are the goods of this world? Are they not the alms which men have received from the Lord? "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," saith the Lord of Hosts by the Prophet Aggaeus. (Chap. ii., 9.) Men are all beggars before God. "What hast thou," says St. Paul, "that thou hast not received?" (II. Cor. iv., 7.) The Lord bestows these goods upon men in order that by means of them they may be enabled to imitate His mercy,

charity and liberality. God wishes that men, His children, should resemble Him as much as possible. The more they endeavor to become like unto Him, the more He is delighted with them. "The Lord values a perfect soul more highly than a thousand imperfect ones," says St. Alphonsus. The reason of this is, because "there is nothing more like unto God," says Plato, "than a holy man." Out of a thousand likenesses of himself, an emperor will value that one most highly which represents him most perfectly. In like manner, God values a soul in which His Image and Likeness shine forth most perfectly, more than a thousand others which resemble Him less perfectly. Hence, all good christians apply themselves constantly to their spiritual progress; they try to enrich their souls every day with greater merits; they endeavor to embellish them more and more by acts of charity and liberality towards their fellow-men. They know that they cannot become like unto God, by any thing better than by the practice of the virtue of mercy. This truth is declared in Holy Scripture by the Holy Ghost Himself. "In judging be merciful to the fatherless as a father, and as a husband to their mother, and thou shalt be as the obedient Son of the Most High, and He will have mercy on thee more than a mother." (Ecclus iv., 10.)

To suffer with hunger, is so great a pain that many, to satisfy the cravings of hunger, have eaten most disgusting things. During the siege of Jerusalem (A. D. 68.), the famine had become so fearful in this doomed city that the inhabitants had recourse to the most horrible expedients to procure a single morsel of food. They dragged the dead from their graves, in the wild hope of finding food. A woman, a mother, murdered her own infant, roasted it

and ate one half of its body, and presented the remainder to the famished soldiers, whom the odor of this execrable meal had attracted to the spot. "It is my son," she said; "be not more tender than a woman, nor more compassionate than a mother."

Many of the readers of these lines will still remember the terrible time of famine in Ireland. There were thousands and thousands wasting away and dying of hunger. They were falling and dying as the leaves fall in autumn. To supply, then, with food the poor and the hungry is a work of charity most pleasing to God. Among the many thousands of Israelites who were led away by Salmanazar into Assyria, there was one, by the name of Tobias, who, for his charity, was distinguished from all the rest. As he had full leave from the king to go where he pleased, he went freely from one part of the country to another, to give all the comfort and assistance in his power to his fellow-captives. "He fed the hungry, and gave clothes to the naked." (Tob. i.) In going about he met a man named Gabelus, who was in great distress. Now, as he had money at his disposal, he loaned to Gabelus ten talents of silver. "From my infancy," says Job, "mercy grew up with me. I have not denied to the poor what they desired. I have not made the eyes of the widow wait. I have not eaten my morsel alone, the fatherless have eaten thereof." (Job, xxxi.)

The saints rejoice in having an opportunity of practising charity, and they feel sad if such an opportunity is wanting. In order to have always such an opportunity, many of the saints fed a certain number of poor people every day; others sold every thing they had, and even contracted debts, to relieve the poor and needy.

St. Louis, King of France, used to feed some poor people at his table, and he himself waited upon them: it was his firm belief that, in the person of the poor, he had Jesus Christ Himself for his guest. He gave money to them with his own hands, because they are, said he, my soldiers to defend my kingdom; I myself, then, must pay their salary.

St. Charles Borromeo sold one of his estates for forty thousand dollars to relieve the poor.

St. Serapion gave away even part of his clothing. Upon being asked why he did so, he pointed to the Gospel and said: "Behold what has robbed me of every thing!" He gave in alms even the Gospel book itself. (Life.)

St. Camillus de Lellis contracted a debt of thirty thousand dollars for the relief of the poor.

Our Lord preserved the right arm of St. Oswald, king of England, uncorrupt, because He wished thus to honor him for having given with his right hand so many alms to the poor. (Butler's Lives of the Saints.)

St. John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria, was, as it were, an ocean of alms; the more he bestowed, the more he received. The saint tells us what especially induced him to practise this virtue. "When I was fifteen years old," he says, "and lived in Cyprus, I saw in a dream a virgin of charming beauty, with a splendid crown on her head. She drew near me, and gently struck me with her hand. I was frightened, and awoke from my sleep. When I asked her who she was, and whence she had come, and how she could dare come near me whilst asleep, she smiled, cast upon me a most gracious look, and said in joyful accents: 'I am the first among the king's

daughters. If you have me for your friend, you will also have the king for your most intimate friend. No one enjoys more his confidence, and stands in higher favor with him than I. It was I who persuaded him to leave heaven for earth, there to become man.' After having reflected on this vision for some time, I thought that it meant mercy and charity. I rose at once and went to church. On my way thither, I met a poor man who was almost naked, and shivering with cold. I took off my coat and gave it to him, saying to myself: Now let me see whether the vision I had was true. Before I reached the church, a certain man came and gave me one hundred dollars in gold, and then disappeared suddenly. Now I felt persuaded that the vision was no illusion, but a true vision from God." (Life by Leontius.)

From that time the saint devoted himself so much to works of charity that he became the example and admiration of the whole world. "It is not right for us," he used to say, "to attend to the affairs of others sooner than to those of Jesus Christ. Go, then, about in the town, and take up the names of all my masters." And on being asked who they were whom he called his masters, he answered: "They are those whom you call the poor and needy. They are my masters and my helpers. For they alone are able to assist me, that I may not be excluded from life everlasting. And no sooner have I given away something, than I receive it back a hundred-fold." This saint, while admiring the great goodness of God who sent him so many good things, was often heard to exclaim: "So! so! my-Lord! Let us see whether Thou art more liberal in sending means than I in bestowing them!" One day Sophronius saw this saint much cast down. He asked

him the cause of his sadness. "I feel unhappy to-day," he answered, "because I had no opportunity to offer to God something in expiation of my sins by assisting the poor."

2. *To give drink to the thirsty.*

The pain of thirst is a greater pain than that of hunger. Those who are sick and dying, generally complain of great thirst. Our dear Saviour himself, when hanging on the cross, could not help manifesting the pain which was caused by thirst. Plutarch relates that Lysimachus, king of Thracia, surrendered, after a battle, his kingdom to his enemy, in order to obtain water to quench his thirst. How happy must not this enemy of Lysimachus have felt when he bought a whole kingdom at so cheap a price. But our dear Lord has promised to give more than an earthly kingdom to him who gives drink to those who cannot help themselves, to prisoners, to the sick and the poor. "Whoever," he says, "shall give to drink to one of those little ones a cup of cold water, amen I say to you he shall not lose his reward." (Matt. x., 42.)

Leo Majoran met one day in the wilderness, a poor, blind beggar, who had lost his way, and suffered exceedingly with thirst. Leo went immediately in search of water, gave it to the poor man, and led him back to the right road. Almighty God was so much pleased with this act of charity that he made Leo hear a voice assuring him that he would become emperor as a reward for his charity. (Baron. ad An. 457., Num. 6.)

Whilst St. Anastasia suffered the torments of martyrdom, she experienced an excruciating thirst. She asked for a drink of water. A certain man, a heathen, named Cyrillus, felt compassion on her, and went immediately

for water and gave it to her. Almighty God rewarded him for this act of charity by giving him the grace to become a christian and die a martyr.

3. *To clothe the naked.*

“When thou shalt see one naked,” says the prophet Isaias, “cover him.” (Lviii., 7.) To clothe the poor for the sake of Jesus Christ, is to clothe Christ himself: “I was naked and you covered me.” (Matt. xxv., 36.)

St. Sulpicius relates the following beautiful example of the compassion and charity of St. Martin, bishop of Tours. One day in the midst of a very hard winter and severe frost, when many perished with cold, as he was marching with other officers and soldiers, he met at the gate of the City of Amiens, a poor man, almost naked, trembling and shaking with cold, and begging alms of those that passed by. When Martin saw that those who went before him, took no notice of the poor man, he felt great compassion for him. As he had nothing left but his arms and clothes upon his back, he drew his sword and cut his cloak into two pieces, gave one to the beggar, and wrapped himself in the other. Some of the by-standers laughed at the figure he made in that dress, whilst others were ashamed not to have relieved the poor man. The following night, St. Martin saw, in his sleep, Jesus Christ dressed in that half of the garment which he had given away, and was bidden to look at it well, and asked whether he knew it. He then heard Jesus Christ say to the angels that surrounded him: “Martin, yet a catechumen, has clothed me with this garment.”

4. *To harbor the harborless.*

Those who, for the sake of Jesus Christ, harbor the poor and friendless, give such pleasure to our Lord, that,

on the day of judgment, he will say to them: "I was a stranger and you took me in" (Matt. xxv., 35.), and then, for having given him, in the person of the poor, a little room in their dwelling, he will give them his immense, everlasting kingdom. If it is not in your power to harbor the poor, give them something to pay towards a night's lodging, help to support orphan asylums, hospitals, and other charitable institutions, and you will largely share in the corporal works of mercy, that are performed there.

Cæsarîus relates (L. iii., c. 68.) that a certain family was always very kind and hospitable to the poor, and was, on this account, blessed by God, spiritually and temporally. They never suffered from want, and all the members were very religious. Now, it happened that two members of the family died, and with them all temporal and spiritual prosperity and happiness seemed to have left the family. One day a venerable old man came and asked for a night's lodging. He obtained it with great difficulty. One of the inmates of the house told him that they had been well off, and lived in great peace and happiness, but that since the death of two members of the family, all spiritual and temporal welfare had gradually vanished. To this the stranger replied: "My friend, those deceased members are *Date*, 'give,' and *Dabitur*, 'it shall be given to you.' (Luke vi., 38.) Let these two members come back, and you will be again as happy and prosperous as before." These words made a deep impression upon the family. They understood that the blessing of God was withdrawn because they had ceased to practise hospitality to the poor. So they returned to the practice of their former charity, and with it returned the blessing of God.

5. *To visit the sick.*

During his life, our dear Saviour was the comforter of

the sick. For them he showed more than a mother's compassion. For them he wrought most of his miracles. "I will come," he said to the centurion, "and heal thy servant." (Matt. viii., 7.) "He went about," says the Evangelist, "doing good, and healing all that were suffering." (Matt. xi., 5.) Let the sick, especially if poor and abandoned, be as dear to you as the apple of your eye. If your charity is to shine forth towards all, it should shine forth especially towards the poor when they are sick. Procure for them all the relief and comfort you can; and if it is not in your power to assist them, ask others to do something for them. Show at least, compassion for them. "As long as I know," wrote St. Francis de Sales to a sick person, "that you are confined to your bed of sickness, I will always bear you a great love and affection as to a person visited by the Lord. I am sincere in what I say."

Bear also patiently and charitably with the weaknesses of the sick, and pretend not to notice them. Do not require of them the perfect practice of virtue at a time when they are depressed by pains and miseries.

To be harsh and hard to the sick is to become accountable to God for their pains and sufferings. Generally speaking, those who were often sick themselves, are most charitable to the sick. "It is by my own pains, sufferings and infirmities," says St. Frances de Chantal, "that the Lord was pleased to make me sympathize with the sick, and practise patience and charity towards them. The Lord made me understand that there is nothing equal to perfect charity." You cannot go easily to excess in charity and affection for the sick, when there is question about procuring relief for them, not only when they are dangerously ill, but also when they complain of light indispositions. These

indispositions, it is true, may sometimes be nothing but over great anxiety for their health, or may be only imaginary, or exaggerated; yet, generally speaking, you should believe what they tell you, for a slight indisposition may prove serious if neglected in the beginning. Even in imaginary evils there is some reality at the bottom on account of the uneasiness and anxiety which they produce. Besides, should you not believe them, they will be afraid to tell you again when they are really suffering, thinking within themselves that it is useless to speak to you about their sufferings, because you would not believe them anyhow; and this might be followed by evil consequences. Hence, it is better to be deceived than not to apply remedies to evils which may really exist. Conceal then your hesitation to believe them, even if you have the best of reasons not to believe them. It is better to show yourself rather ready to believe them, than to expose yourself to the danger of violating charity.

There lived in Alexandria a pious and wealthy lady who, wishing to make rapid progress in virtue, went to the bishop, St. Athanasius, and begged him to permit her to take home with her one of the sick poor widows, who depended on the church for support. St. Athanasius, greatly pleased with her charitable design, selected for her an old lady who was very pious and sweet-tempered. The good lady took her home and waited on her day and night with the greatest attention, and the pious old woman thanked and blessed her continually for her great kindness. Now the charitable lady, fearing that she would not have much reward in the other world for serving one who was so sweet-tempered and thankful, went once more to the bishop and requested him to send her one who was ill-temp-

ered, who would try her patience, and thus afford her an opportunity of meriting heaven. The bishop astonished at the request, said: "Very well!. Your request shall be granted!" The bishop then gave orders to send her one of the sourest and most ill-tempered sick old women that could be found in the city—and as Cassian naively remarks—"such a one was easily found."

The old woman was brought to the rich lady's house. She was every thing that could be desired—cross-grained, peevish, quarrelsome, never satisfied, and, what was worse than all, her tongue had a very loose rein. The rich lady tried her utmost to serve and please her, but all in vain; she received only abuse and curses for her charity. Sometimes, even, the old woman struck her. To every one that came in, she complained that the rich lady neglected and starved her. The pious lady felt at times almost discouraged, still she prayed and continued her offices of charity till finally God called her to himself. (Cassian, Confessions.)

One of the chief reasons why you should be very kind to the sick is, that you may be better able to benefit their souls in their pains and sufferings. A sick person will listen the more willingly to your spiritual discourse, the more he notices your charity and solicitude for him. Many a soul, it is true, is brought to a sense of her duty and enters into herself by means of bodily sickness; but the number of those who do not profit by their sufferings is far greater, because there are but too many who at the time of sickness, especially when the disease has assumed a chronic form, and also at the time of convalescence, do not combat their disorderly appetites, and, from being servants of God, they soon become the slaves of corrupt nature.

To guard the sick against this spiritual lethargy, it is well to relate to them what Father Surin, S. J., writes in one of his letters: "A young man," he says, "filled with the Holy Ghost, and with whom I had the happiness to travel for three days and from whom I learned more of the spiritual life than ever before, told me among other things, that one of our greatest evils is that we do not profit well by our bodily infirmities." "The Lord," said Father Surin, "inflicts them upon us for a wise purpose. He unites Himself to the soul more perfectly by sufferings than by consolations. Hence too great a care for preserving our health is a great obstacle in the road to perfection."

Should a soul experience a great desire to advance in the spiritual life and to give herself up to prayer, but feel unable to do so on account of her bodily infirmities, let her consider that God requires of her an angelic patience, a constant resignation and calm submission to the dispositions of His divine providence, a generous abandonment of herself to His fatherly care, a perfect holy indifference for life or death, and an utter contempt for all earthly things. Then, if the Lord should wish to make use of her for His glory, He will repair in an hour's time all the harm that a sickness of several years may have caused her to suffer in her body. Hence, sick people must be repeatedly exhorted to pray often and most fervently for the grace to profit well by their sickness, and obtain the wise end for which the Lord is accustomed to visit us with different kinds of infirmities, in order that it may be said of them in truth: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

A great means to dispose sick people to submit to God's

holy will, and to holy indifference for life or death, is to show them that, by accepting death with perfect resignation to the holy will of God, they die with a merit similar to that of a martyr and go straight to heaven after death.

Death is the last sacrifice that we can make to God. It is a sacrifice most difficult to make, because death is unnatural. Death is a punishment inflicted on all men, in consequence of the sin of Adam; it is revolting to our nature, for man was not made to die. Now, to die perfectly resigned to the just and holy will of God, is to die with a merit similar to that of martyrdom. According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, the merit of martyrdom does not consist merely in suffering many horrible torments; it consists rather in the conformity of the martyr's will to the holy will of God. Now, if God, instead of employing the hand of the executioner, makes use of some natural means, such as sickness, or an accident, to take away my life, and I accept death with as much resignation as a martyr, God will give me the reward that he gives to a martyr. Now, our faith teaches that a martyr, after death, goes straight to heaven. If I die, then, with the dispositions and the merit of a martyr, my reward will be similar to his. Hence, not only those acquire the merit and crown of martyrdom who die for the faith, but also all those who cheerfully accept death for the love of God. Such a death is an act of perfect love, because by it we abandon and sacrifice ourselves without reserve to the holy will of God. Consequently, such an act of love cancels sin and the punishment due to it.

In order to be able to make this act of love at the hour of death, we should accustom ourselves to make it often

during life. We should often make an offering of our life to God, declaring ourselves ready to accept, at any time, the kind of death which he has decreed for us from all eternity. As soon as the holy martyrs knew that they had to suffer martyrdom, they began to make frequent offerings of their life to God. For every such act they have obtained in heaven a special reward. We should imitate their example, because we, too, shall receive in heaven, as many crowns as we have made acts of entire abandonment of ourselves into the hands of God. We should daily beseech our Lord most earnestly to grant us the grace to accept death at his hands with the intention of pleasing him and doing his holy will.

Although this doctrine is very consoling for sick persons and well calculated to dispose them to a perfect resignation to God's holy will, yet let it be remembered that if the Lord does not enlighten their mind to understand it, and inflame their will to embrace and to love it, they will draw from it but little comfort and encouragement. In the life of St. Lidwine, who was sick for thirty-eight years, we read that in the beginning of her sickness she shrank from suffering. By a particular disposition of Providence, however, a celebrated servant of God, John Por, went to see her, and preceiving that she was not quite resigned to the will of God, he exhorted her to meditate frequently on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that by the remembrance of His Passion she might gain courage to suffer more willingly. She promised to do so and fulfilled her promise, but could not find any relief for her soul. Every meditation was irksome and unpleasant, and she began again to break out into her usual complaints. Upon being asked by her director how she had succeeded

in her meditation upon our Lord's Passion, and what profit she had derived from it, she replied, "O my father, your counsel was very good indeed, but the greatness of my sufferings does not permit me to find any consolation in meditating on my Saviour's sorrows." Seeing at last that Lidwine derived no benefit from his charitable exhortations, the Rev. Father Por thought of another means. He gave her Holy Communion and, immediately after, whispered into her ear: "Till now I have tried to console you, but in vain; but now let Jesus Christ Himself perform this office." Behold! no sooner had she swallowed the Sacred Host than she felt so great a love for Jesus Christ and so ardent a desire to become like unto Him in His sufferings that she broke out into sobs and sighs, and for two weeks she was hardly able to stop her tears. From this moment she never complained again, but desired to suffer still more for Jesus Christ.

Hence it is evident that the sick should be strengthened by the frequent reception of the sacraments; for they will derive more benefit from one single communion than from all the exhortations they may receive, no matter how pious or persuasive they may be.

I have dwelled so long on this point, from the conviction that there is scarcely any thing more apt to draw the blessing of God upon one's self than the careful and charitable attendance to the corporal and spiritual wants of the sick, whilst, on the other hand, the neglect of this duty is followed by many great evils.

How well the Lord is pleased with one who faithfully complies with this duty, and how great a reward is awaiting him in the life to come, may be gathered from what we read in the life and revelations of St. Gertrude. One day

after having recited the Office as far as the fifth lesson, St. Gertrude saw a religious who was ill and who had no one to say Matins with her. The Saint, moved by the charity which always animated her, said to our Lord: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have almost exhausted the little strength I have in reciting my Office so far; nevertheless, as I ardently desire Thee to abide with me during these holy days and as I have not a fitting abode prepared for Thee, I am willing, for Thy sake, and in satisfaction for my faults, to commence Matins again." As she began the Office once more, our Lord verified the words "I was sick and you visited Me; and as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me," by appearing to her and overwhelming her with sweet consolations, which could neither be explained nor understood.

It appeared to the Saint that our Lord was seated at a table in the most sublime glory, and that He was distributing ineffable gifts, graces, and joys to the souls in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory, not only for each word, but even for each *letter* which she had repeated with the sick sister; and she also received an intelligence of the Psalms, Responses and Lessons, which filled her with inexpressible delight. And when she besought our Lord to pour forth an abundant grace and benediction on the whole Church, "What do you desire that I should do, My beloved?" replied He, "for I give Myself up to you with the same love and resignation as I abandoned myself to My Father on the Cross; for even as I would not descend from the Cross, until He willed it, so now I desire to do nothing but what you will. Distribute, then, in virtue of my Divinity, all that you desire and as abundantly as you desire."

After Matins, the Saint retired again to rest, and our Lord said to her: "She who wearies herself in exercises of charity, has a right to repose peacefully on the couch of charity," and as He said this, He soothed her soul so tenderly that it appeared to her as if she did, indeed, repose on the bosom of this heavenly Bridegroom. Then she beheld a tree of charity, very high and very fair, covered with fruit and flowers and with leaves shining like stars which sprang forth from the heart of Jesus, extending and lowering its branches so as to surround and cover the nuptial couch on which the soul of Gertrude reposed. And she saw a spring of pure water gush forth from its roots, which shot upwards and then returned again to its source, and this refreshed her soul marvelously. By this she understood the Divinity of Jesus Christ sweetly reposing in His humanity, which imparts ineffable joys to the charitable elect. (Life and Revelations: chap. xxxvi.)

6. To visit the imprisoned ?

To be deprived of liberty is one of the greatest afflictions. Those who suffer in prison for crimes which they committed, are deprived of their liberty through their own fault. However, christian charity requires us to show compassion for them as far as possible. We often hear that many a prisoner committed suicide, or went to the place of execution in complete despair. The reason of this may be, because he saw himself abandoned by every body. It is, therefore, an act of great charity to relieve these sufferers as far as we are able. Charity and kindness towards them will soften their hearts, make them repent of their crimes, and inspire them with the sincere desire to be reconciled to God, and accept their punishment at the hand of God in expiation of their sins.

In 1851, a murder was committed near Paris, in France. A captain of the carabineers, an excellent officer, beloved by all, going, as usual, the rounds of the stables, had reprimanded one of the troopers whose conduct had not been very regular. The latter made no reply, but apparently turned away with a calm countenance, and went up to the mess-room. There he loaded one of his horse-pistols, and, going back to the stable, approached his captain, and with a deadly aim, discharged it against the loins of the officer. The unfortunate man fell, weltering in his blood. They took him up, carried him to his room, and the surgeons pronounced the wound mortal. In fact, the poor captain breathed his last, a few hours after, in the arms of his old mother, in the midst of horrible sufferings, endured heroically, and with sentiments of faith and charity truly admirable. He had made his confession with great piety, had received the Blessed Sacrament, and, in imitation of his divine Master praying on the cross for his crucifiers, had pardoned his murderer, and begged for his pardon with the most touching and pressing appeal.

The murderer had been arrested on the spot, and transferred to the prison in Paris. There he was abandoned by all, except the priest. Two or three days after the deed had been committed, the priest went to see the trooper, for the first time, in the cell of the military prison. He encouraged him to hope in the mercy of God, and to prepare himself for a good confession, and to accept death in expiation of his crime. The poor criminal was touched by the words of the priest, and said: "I have been the victim of a moment of fury and insanity. It was a punishment from God, whom I had abandoned. Had I always prayed as I do now, I should not have come

to this pass. My father said to me often: 'Fear God, and pray to him: he alone is good, all the rest is nothing!' But it is so hard to do so at the regiment; we are always surrounded by young men who say nothing but what is bad." When he heard that he had been sentenced to death, he exclaimed: "The sentence is just; to appeal would be to go against the goodness of God. They would show me a mercy that I do not wish for, because the punishment must be undergone. I must atone for what I have done. My hopes are no longer here below. I have only God to look to. He is now every thing to me; in him alone do I trust. I feel quite calm; I feel no rebellion in my heart; I am perfectly resigned to the will of God."

Now, what brought about that calmness, that happiness, in this poor prisoner? It was his sincere confession which the priest was kind enough to hear. It was holy communion, which the priest brought to him several times. In a word, it was the charity of the priest, who often went to see him in his prison, in order to console him, and to inspire him with great confidence in the mercy of God.

During the three hours and a half of the drive to the place of execution, he never lost his calmness. God was with him in the person of the priest, who accompanied him to the Savory Plains, where he was to be shot. What a touching spectacle: to behold, on a wagon, a tall man, the culprit, followed by the priest of God; to see how the priest was even paler than the culprit; and to see them walking side by side, you would think that *he* was the one to be shot!

The expression of the culprit's countenance evinced great calmness and resignation; his eyes betrayed, at

once, sorrow and hope. He seemed to pray with fervor. There was no sadness in his looks; there could even be seen the reflections of a certain inward joy. He listened, with love and deep attention, to the words addressed to him by the minister of Jesus Christ. When the priest said to him, "Our Lord is between us two: my poor child, we are always well when the good Saviour is with us," he replied: "Oh, yes, my heart is perfectly happy. I did not think I should tell you, but I feel as if I was going to a wedding. God has permitted all this for my good, to save my soul. I feel so much consoled, thinking that my poor captain died a good christian! I am going to see him; he is praying for me now. My God has saved me; I feel that he will have mercy on me. He ascended Calvary, carrying his cross: I accompany him. I shall not resist whatever they wish to do with me—tie me, or bandage my eyes. Ah! the poor soldiers are lost because they do not listen to you priests. Without you, without religion, the whole world would be lost!"

When they drove by the barracks, where he had committed the murder, he offered a prayer for his captain. "I can't conceive how I could have done it! I had no ill-will against him! Could the commission of a sin save me from being shot, I would not commit it: I think so now. I have nothing to keep me here; I am going to see God!"

When they had arrived at the place of execution, the priest and the culprit alighted. An officer read the sentence. The culprit replied: "I acknowledge the justice of my punishment; I am sorry for what I have done; I beg of God to pardon me: I love him with all my heart!" Then he knelt; the priest gave him the crucifix to kiss for the

last time. "My father," he said, with feeling expression — "my father, I place my soul within your hands; I unite my death to that of my Saviour Jesus. Farewell! farewell!" The priest embraced him once more. Then with his arms extended in the form of a cross, the culprit inclined his head, and awaited his death. The priest retired to pray at some distance. One minute after, human justice had been satisfied, and the soul of the unfortunate soldier, purified and transformed by religion, had fled to the bosom of him who pardons all those who repent. The priest resumed his place by him, and, with tears in his eyes, prayed, on his knees, for the departed soul of the unfortunate carbineer.

There are others, who may lose their liberty in defense of their country, as it generally happens in the time of war. Others, again, may lose their liberty in defense of the Catholic religion, as it happened in the time of the crusades. Others, again, may be carried off by violence, into the hands of idolators, where they are cruelly treated and have to live in barbarous slavery.

About eight centuries ago, the Moors were very powerful. They often landed on the coast of southern Europe, seized upon many defenseless christians, and sold them as slaves. They also attacked christian vessels, plundered them, and sold the crew into bondage. There lived at this time in Paris, a holy priest, named John de Matha. During his first Mass he was honored by a heavenly vision. He beheld a bright angel, clad in a robe of snowy whiteness. On his breast shimmered a cross of blue and crimson. He held his hand extended over a Moor and a christian who stood beside him. The saint understood from this vision that he was called by God to ransom

christian captives. In order, then, to prepare himself for this generous undertaking, he quitted Paris and retired to the wilderness where he sought the company of St. Felix, a holy hermit, who was heir to the crown of France, but had quitted all to secure his salvation. While these holy men were, one day, seated near a cool spring that gushed forth beside their hermitage, and were discoursing of heavenly things, they suddenly beheld a snow-white stag. Between its antlers glittered a brilliant cross of blue and crimson. St. John de Matha now told his astonished companion the vision he had seen during his first Mass. The two holy men then agreed to obey the voice of heaven and to found an order for the redemption of christian captives. They set out for Rome to receive the approbation of the Pope. On their arrival they were graciously received, and on the following morning the Pope also, during Mass, had the same vision which John de Matha beheld in Paris. The holy Father approved the new order, and gave it the name of the Most Holy Trinity.

Now from the fact that God called into existence a religious order for the purpose of redeeming christian captives, we clearly see that to visit the imprisoned, or contribute towards the ransom of christians, is a work most pleasing to the Lord. Those who, for Christ's sake, have performed this corporal work of mercy, will, on the day of doom hear the Eternal Judge say to them: "I was in prison, and you came to me." (Matt. xxv., 36.)

One day, a poor widow came to St. Paulinus, bishop of Nola, and begged him, with tears in her eyes, to procure for her the means to redeem her son who had fallen into the hands of a cruel idolator. So St. Paulinus went to

the master of the poor widow's son, and said to him: "Be kind enough to let the son of this poor woman return home, and keep me instead." The request of the holy bishop was granted. He lived in slavery and worked as a gardener for a long time, until at last he obtained his liberty in a wonderful manner, and returned into his diocese with many fellow-captives. (Life.)

7. To bury the dead.

After Adam had sinned, God said to him: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii., 19.) The grave, then, is our earthly home, as heaven is our eternal one.

What is the meaning of the word "home?" Home is the hallowed ground, where we are born. Now where were we born? Whence have we sprung? We have come from the ground. "God made the first man out of the slime of the earth," says holy writ. The earth then is our home, the earth blessed by the hand of God. But where can we find that earth blessed by the hand of God? In the churchyard—in the grave. The Holy Ghost admonishes us not to refuse this home to the dead. "Stretch out thy hand to the poor, and restrain not grace from the dead." (Ecclus. vii., 36-37.) To contribute, then, towards defraying the expenses of christian funerals of the poor, or to help burying them, or to honor their dead bodies by accompanying them to the graveyard, is to perform the seventh corporal work of mercy.

We read in Holy Scripture that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, inflicted many kinds of cruelties upon the captive Israelites. He put many of them to death, and left their

bodies unburied. Now it happened that, whilst Tobias was at dinner, he was told that an Israelite had just been slain in the street. He immediately rose from table, took his corpse and concealed it in his house till night, and then buried it. His friends reminded him of the great danger he had but lately escaped, and said that his zeal was indiscreet. Tobias, who had a greater regard for God than for men, could not be talked out of his duty. He would not suffer a dead body that came in his way to remain unburied. Hence he deserved to hear the archangel Raphael say to him: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Tob. xii., 12.) Almighty God has often shown, in a wonderful manner, how pleasing it is to him to bury the dead.

After St. Catharine had suffered the death of martyrdom in Alexandria, in the year 306, her body was carried by angels to Mount Sinai, and buried there.

One day, St. Anthony, the hermit, went to see St. Paul. He found him kneeling in his cave and thought that he was praying. Full of joy, and supposing him yet alive, he knelt down to pray with him, but, by his silence, soon perceived that he was dead. Having paid his last respects to the holy body, he carried it out of the cave. Whilst he was at a loss how to dig a grave, two lions came up quietly, and, as if mourning. They tore up the ground and made a hole large enough for the reception of a human body. St. Anthony then buried the holy corpse, singing hymns and psalms according to holy usages of the Church. (Butler's Lives of the Saints, Jany. 15.)

St. Stanislas, bishop of Cracow, repeatedly admonished

Boleslaus II., the impious king of Poland, to give up his scandalous conduct. At these fatherly admonitions, the king became so infuriated, that he, with his own hand, killed the holy bishop. Then his life-guards fell on the martyr's body and cut it into pieces which they scattered about the fields to be devoured by wild beasts and birds of prey. But eagles came and defended them, till the canons of the cathedral, three days after, gathered them together and buried them before the door of the chapel in which he was martyred. Wonderful to relate, when they put the pieces together, in as natural an order as possible, they grew conjointly so as not to leave even a scar. (Life, May 7.)

There are many who, when preparing for burying their dead friends and relatives, show more honor to their bodies than to their souls. There is a lavish expense for the funeral. A hundred dollars are spent where the means of the family hardly justify the half of it. Where there is more wealth, sometimes five hundred or a thousand, and even more, dollars are expended on the dead body. But let me ask, what is done for the poor living soul! Perhaps the poor soul is suffering the most frightful tortures in purgatory, whilst the lifeless body is laid out in state, and borne pompously to the graveyard.

You must not misunderstand me. It is certainly right and just to show all due respect even to the body of your deceased friend, for that body was once the dwelling-place of his soul. But tell me candidly, what joy has the departed and, perhaps, suffering soul in the fine music of the choir, even should the choir be composed of the best (opera) singers in the country? What consolation does the suffering soul feel in the superb coffin, in the splendid

funeral? What pleasure does the soul find in the costly marble monument, in all the honors that are so freely lavished on the body? All this may satisfy, or at least seem to satisfy, the living, but it is of no avail whatever to the dead. Poor, unhappy souls! how the diminution of true Catholic faith and charity is visited upon you while you suffer, and those that loved you in life might help you, and do not, for want of knowledge or faith! Poor, unhappy souls! whilst your friends accompany your bodies to the graveyard, how many prayers did they recite for you? How many masses had they offered up for you? After returning from your graves, they go to their business, to their eating and drinking, with the foolish assurance that the case cannot be hard on one they know to be so good! Oh! how much, and how long this *false charity* of your friends makes you suffer! If we, then, wish to please God by burying the dead, if we desire to honor our deceased friends and relatives by accompanying their bodies to the graveyard, we must assist at their funerals with true, christian sentiments of piety; we must pray for the repose of their souls, and request the prayers of others for them. And, oh! what impressive lessons does not the graveyard teach us!

Again, what is home? Home is that hallowed spot where dwell our forefathers, friends, relatives, and all those we hold dear. Now, where do they all dwell or what is their last resting-place? It is the grave. Where are those who loved and nursed you in early childhood, who soothed you when lying on the bed of fever, who watched you through the long dull nights, who cooled your burning brow, who kissed away your tears? Ah! how

many of us miss them now! Those who labored and wept and suffered for us; those who always advised us for our good; who tried to keep us from harm and lead us on to a life of virtue; those who loving us with pure unselfish love, would gladly have given their heart's blood to save us; those whose good name and blessing we inherit—where do they dwell, where do they sleep? Their home, their resting-place, is the graveyard!

Hence it is that every pure and loving heart loves to visit the graveyard; to deck with flowers the hallowed spot where sleep their loved ones; and to offer up heartfelt prayers and tears for the repose of their souls departed.

Where will you find those with whom you were once united in the bonds of pure and hallowed love: those who loved you once and who love you still? Death has torn from your arms the dear husband and loved wife. You were but one heart and one soul. You walked together so long, side by side, through this vale of tears. The icy hand of death snapped the sweet bonds of love in twain; the grave now hides that faithful heart in which you fondly trusted. You are left alone in the wide world; you must bear your cross alone. Your dear little ones are fatherless now. A strange homesickness draws you forth from the busy haunts of men to the silent graveyard. Ah! it is there the broken-hearted feel that they have found home.

See that poor mother. She has brought forth her child amid pain and tears. She loves it as the apple of her eye, as a portion of her very being. She breathes of its breath, she lives of its life. But cruel death comes and breathes on the sweet flower; it withers in the bud. Her dear child is torn from her breast, from her loving arms; her

tender heart bleeds. With ringing hands and broken heart, and weeping eyes she totters behind the coffin that bears her hope, her all on earth. Ah! ask that heart-broken mother where is her home now! She will lead you to the silent churchyard and the grave where her loved one is buried.

Who is there among us who has not a dear friend, or beloved one resting in the graveyard? Ah! whoever has a heart that is capable of thanking and loving will feel drawn to weep and pray at the grave of the loved one. And, therefore, the grave is not to us a place of terror. It is the meeting-place of loved ones, the abode of blessing and peace; it is our home!

Woe to him who flies from the grave! Woe to him whom the sight of the grave fills only with hate and terror! His conscience tortures him, because the grave reminds him of some one he has hastened to an untimely death; some one whose life he has embittered, whose heart he has broken by cruelty, by treachery, by the blackest ingratitude.

The rich, sensual man hates the sight of the grave; because his soul is buried in wealth and luxury, and the grave speaks to him of death, that death shall tear him away from all he holds dear, that death which is followed by judgment which shall decide his fate for weal or woe for eternity. The graveyard is the school of true wisdom, it speaks a language calm and stern. It shows us the folly of human pride and human ambition. The path of glory leads but to the grave. When tempted to vanity to pride or ambition, go visit the graveyard; saunter among the abodes of the dead; mark the inscriptions on the tombs, and remember those who lie buried there,

whose memory perchance is long forgotten ; once cherished fond dreams of greatness like yourself, were once flattered for their wit and beauty, or envied for their wealth. Where is their wealth and beauty now ?

When the accursed thirst for gold torments you, when you are tempted to defraud your neighbor, to forswear your holy faith for the sake of some office, for a membership in some secret society, go to the graveyard ; ask the dead how much of all their wealth they have taken with them to the other world !

Are you dissatisfied with your lot ; do you complain that God has been unkind to you ? Go to the graveyard and see how in death all are equal, how short is life, how brief are all our joys and all our sorrows. The grave tells you : " There is a joy, there is a woe : and both are everlasting ! "

Does the devil tempt you to revenge ? do you feel the spirit of hatred glowing in your heart, and throbbing in your brain ? Go to the graveyard. See how the most bitter enemies sleep there so peacefully side by side. Are you one of those who enjoy life, who spend your days in feasting and rioting, who watch so jealously over the beauty of your face, the symmetry of your form ? Go to the graveyard. The delicately-nurtured body, the beautiful face, the graceful form, are all hideous and loathesome ; they are become the prey of countless worms.

Indeed, the graveyard is the school of solid wisdom. There the living may learn from the dead. There we can learn to hate sin, to love God, and to save our eternal soul.

Where is your true home, your last dwelling-place ? You rent or own a house or room which you call your

home ; but that home, you will have soon to leave. There is one home, where your name is to be inscribed ; one home where you shall dwell winter and summer, year after year, and no landlord or lawsuit will be able to dispossess you ; and that is the grave. How poor soever you may be, even though you have not one foot of land you can call your own, there, in the grave, you will become land-owner, you will have at least one spot of earth that you can call your own. Even if you lose your property, even if deprived of all your rights, this property at least you will retain, and this one right, the right to a grave. You complain that your enemies give you no rest. Ah ! there, in the grave, they shall not disturb you any more ; there your bones can rest in peace. Are you hated, mocked, and persecuted ? See, in the grave, your enemies can no longer annoy you ; in the grave, you will find a true home ; in the grave, you can sleep in undisturbed peace. In the grave, you can rest from all your cares and labors and sorrows ; you can rest from your long weary wanderings. When your long day's work is ended, when you have fought the last dread fight, and yielded to the angel of death, your friends bear you to your last resting-place, the grave. Yes, it is the last resting-place of us all. You may wander over the wide world, and sigh because the world seems too small to satisfy the desires of your heart ; you may dwell in the healthiest clime ; you may have wealth and enjoyment, you may live to a green old age ; at last, the end of all your travels, and amusements, and honors, shall be the silent grave.

The grave is indeed our true home. Let us then visit it often. It is a spot consecrated to prayer, and love and holy fear. The sunken graves, the moss-grown tomb-

stones, the weather-stained crosses, the withered wreathes, and mouldering bones of the dead, will then speak eloquently to your heart. There you may learn betimes to die to the world and its vanities, to the flesh and its sinful desires. There you will grow more familiar day by day with the earnest thoughts of death, judgment and eternity ! ; Pray often, then, for the souls of the faithful departed, and when you shall go to your last home, tears of love and gratitude will bedew your tomb, and other lips and hearts will breathe that prayer for you : "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine unto them !"

12. Which are the spiritual works of mercy ?

1, To convert the sinner ; 2, to instruct the ignorant ; 3, to counsel the doubtful ; 4, to comfort the sorrowful ; 5, to bear wrongs patiently ; 6, to forgive injuries ; 7, to pray for the living and the dead.

1. To convert the sinner.

It is an article of our holy faith that the Son of God descended from heaven, became man, and died on the infamous gibbet of the cross, for no other purpose than to save mankind from perpetual destruction. His whole life was devoted to this end. For this purpose alone he established his Church on earth. Every christian, therefore, ought to be inflamed with zeal for the salvation of souls.

Now, what is the meaning of zeal for the salvation of souls ? It is a desire to see God truly loved, and honored, and served by all men. Those who are inflamed with this beautiful fire endeavor to communicate it to the whole world. If they perceive that God is offended, they weep and lament ; they feel interiorly devoured and consumed

by the fervor of their zeal. "Who should be looked upon as a man consumed with the zeal for the house of God?" asked St. Augustine. "He who ardently desires to prevent offences against God, and endeavors to induce those who have sinned to weep, and weeps and groans himself when he sees God dishonored." With such a zeal the saints of the Old Law were inflamed. "I found my heart and my bones," says Jeremiah (Xx., 9, 10.), "secretly inflamed as with a fire that even devoured me; and I fainted away, not being able to resist it; because I heard the blasphemies of many people." "I was inflamed with zeal for the God of armies," says Elias, "because the children of Israel have broken their covenant." (III. Kings xix., 10.) "A fainting has taken hold of me," says the Royal Prophet, "because sinners have forsaken thy law; and my zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot thy commandments." (Psalm cxviii., 53.) These holy men were thus afflicted at the sight of the license with which the wicked violated the law of God. The sorrow of their minds passed into the humors of their body, and even into their very blood, as it were. "I beheld the wicked," says David; "I pined away; because they kept not thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii., 158.) "Mine eyes became fountains of water; because they observed not thy law." (*Ibid.*, 136.) It was the violence of his zeal that made David melt into tears when he beheld the infinite majesty of God offended. This zeal made St. Paul write to the Romans: "I speak the truth in Christ; I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. ix., 1-3.)

How much have the saints not done for the salvation of their neighbors ? Let us hear what the great Apostle of the Gentiles says of his own labors, troubles and sufferings for the salvation of men. In his epistles to the Corinthians he writes as follows : “ Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst ; and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode ; and we labor with our own hands ; we are reviled and we bless ; we are persecuted and we suffer it ; we are blasphemed and we entreat ; we are made as the refuse of this world, the scouring of all even until now.” (I. Cor. iv., 11, 13.) “ Our flesh had no rest, but we suffered all tribulation : combats without, fears within.” (II. Cor. vii., 5.) “ In many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods ; once I was stoned ; thrice I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day was I in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” (II. Cor. xi., 23-27.)

Were a St. Francis Xavier to appear among us he could tell us how, for the sake of the barbarians, he climbed mountains and exposed himself to innumerable dangers to find those wretched beings in the caverns, where they dwelt like wild beasts, and lead them to God.

A St. Francis de Sales could tell us how, in order to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, he risked

his life by crossing a river every day for a year, on his hands and knees, upon a frozen beam, that he might preach the truth to those stubborn men.

A St. Fidelis could tell us how, in order to bring back the heretics of a certain place, he risked his life by going to preach to them.

But here one may say: "I am not a priest, and, therefore, I cannot preach to sinners and convert them." To convert sinners, it is not necessary that you should be a priest. Your neighbor, for instance, has given up the practice of his religion for many years. He is sick and expected to die soon. Cannot you pay him a visit, speak kindly to him, and induce him to send for the priest and be reconciled to God? His salvation may depend on your visit, on a few kind words of exhortation and encouragement.

A certain Catholic once went to see a dying sinner. The unhappy man had led a long life of sin, and was now obstinate. He did not wish to hear of God or the priest. The good, zealous Catholic tried every means—tears, promises, threats, prayers; but all in vain. The dying wretch was hardened. At last the zealous Catholic fell on his knees and begged God to give him this soul, and offered, for his sake, to endure any pain that he would inflict on him. An interior voice then said to him: "Your request shall be granted, but only on condition that you are willing to fall back into your former illness." He had formerly been subject to violent fits of colic. The good Catholic offered himself generously. He then once more spoke to the dying man, and found him quite changed—in the very best dispositions. He made his confession with every sign of true sorrow, and offered up

his life in atonement of his sins. He received all the sacraments, and died in the arms of his true Catholic friend. The prayers of the good Catholic were heard; but no sooner had he returned home than he was seized with the most violent pains, which continued to increase until at last he died, the victim of his christian zeal for the salvation of a soul.

To relieve the wants of the body is undoubtedly an act of great charity; but to heal the wounds of the soul is an act of far greater charity. Now it is by admonition and counsel that we contribute towards the healing of the spiritual wounds of our neighbor. It is even a formal precept of the Gospel to do what is in our power to heal the wounds of our neighbor's soul, that is, to admonish him when he is in mortal sin or in danger of falling into it. "If thy brother transgress in thy presence," says our Lord, "reprimand and correct him." (Matt. xviii., 15.) If you neglect to correct the sinner, says St. Augustine, you become thereby worse than himself. So all who have christian charity, whether superiors or inferiors, are bound to admonish and correct those who follow evil ways, if they have sufficient influence and authority over them, and have good reason to hope that the correction will be useful. Should the first admonition be fruitless, we are bound to repeat it several times, when we have good reason to hope that it will finally prove useful.

We are obliged to perform this act of charity: 1, when the sin of our neighbor is certain, but not when it is doubtful; 2, when there is no other person capable of giving the admonition, and when it is not expected that any one else will give it; 3, when there is no reason for a prudent fear that, by correcting our neighbor, we shall suffer a

grievous loss or inconvenience. For, if we have a good reason to fear that the correction will be attended with a considerable loss or inconvenience to ourselves, we are excused from the obligation of making it, because it is only an act of charity which is not obligatory under those circumstances. Parents, however, are obliged to correct their children, even when the correction is attended with great inconvenience.

Has an inferior a right to correct his superior? Every act extends to all that is within the sphere of its power, as the sight, for instance, embraces all that is visible. Now as charity comprises all men without exception, it orders us to exercise fraternal correction without distinction of persons. The inferior, therefore, has a right to correct his superior when he sees him in fault or in error. But this must be done in a mild, prudent, respectful manner; for those who are above us in age or authority, merit respect and veneration. "An ancient man rebuke not, but entreat him as a father." (1 Tim. v., 1.)

Has one, who himself is in fault or sin, a right to correct another? To exercise this right, no more than the use of reason is needed. Now, sin does not destroy the natural gift of man. But he who attempts to direct others in the path of virtue and justice, must, first of all, begin to correct himself, otherwise he cannot be supposed to act with a charitable motive. If he, therefore, shows signs of repentance and amendment, and acts with a spirit of humility, he can exercise fraternal correction.

What is to be done if the correction does not avail anything, but might, on the contrary, irritate the culprit and make him more obstinate? If his conduct is an annoyance or a scandal to the public, his superior ought

to rebuke him and even take severe measures against him if necessary. A judge feels no reluctance to condemn a culprit in spite of his recriminations and the affliction of his family. However, in all such cases, the means must always be proportioned to the end.

Ought a private admonition precede a public denunciation? If the crime is public, there is no necessity of making any mystery of the correction to be given to the criminal. "Them that sin reprove before all, that the rest also may fear." (1 Tim. v., 20.) If the crime or transgression is private, no public denunciation or revelation should be made, unless in case of something detrimental to the public or of a conspiracy against the state. In similar cases, we ought to imitate the skilful physician, who first strives to heal the wound if possible; but if he cannot succeed, he has recourse to amputation, in order to save the life of his patient. A superior, therefore, should not have recourse to extreme measures, when there is hope that a private admonition will reclaim the sinner. Unless things transpire before the eyes of the public, justice and charity require the superior to keep all secret and leave all rest in the hands of God.

In what manner should correction be made? To correct one is an act of charity. Therefore, correction should be made in the spirit of charity. A reproof is a kind of food which is always difficult to digest. Fraternal charity should, then, so sweeten it as to destroy its bitterness, or else it will be like those fruits which cause pain in the stomach. Charity does not seek its own advantage, but the honor of God. Bitterness and severity proceed only from passion, vanity and pride. A good remedy used at an improper time often becomes a deadly poison.

Now, it is easy to know when the correction we make proceeds from charity. Truth proceeds from charity when we speak it only from the love of God and for the good of him whom we reprove. It is better to be silent than to speak a truth ungraciously; for this is to present a good dish badly cooked, or to give medicine unseasonably.

But is this not to keep back the truth unjustly? By no means; to act otherwise is to bring it forth unjustly, because the real justice of truth and the truth of justice reside in charity. That truth which is not charitable proceeds from a charity which is not true. A judicious silence is always preferable to an uncharitable truth.

Hence, in correcting others, we should remember the following advice given by the saints upon this subject:

1. Good example must precede the correction, otherwise it may justly be said: "Physician, cure thyself."

2. Patience must defer it, because, reproof being a bitter remedy, it should be applied, generally speaking, only when every other means has proved useless.

3. It must be given with charity, lest, while striving to heal one wound, we inflict several others.

4. Humility must accompany it by accusing ourselves and assuming thus a part of the disgrace of him whose weakness we have discovered.

5. We ought to be very careful to give a reproof in so mild a manner as to lessen the bitterness of this remedy to which nature is utterly averse. It thus becomes efficacious and strikes at the very root of the evil.

6. In reproofing we should pay attention to the nature of the fault, its consequences, and to the degree of virtue in the delinquent.

7. It is sometimes advisable, before reproofing a person,

to point out to him the nature and greatness of the fault, and then request him to punish himself for it. The penance of a contrite heart is great when it sees itself kindly dealt with. We must blame the offence, but spare the offender.

8. When any one has corrected a fault, forget the past and treat him as if nothing had happened, according to what holy Scripture says: "Despise not a man that turneth away from sin, nor reproach him therewith: remember that we are all worthy of reproof." (Ecclus. viii., 6.) It is in this way that we heal wounds without leaving a scar. We read in the life of St. Alphonsus, that his firmness towards those who persevered in their faults, was changed into mercy when he saw them contrite. He loved with an exceedingly great love those who amended their conduct after his admonitions. He pressed them to his bosom, forgot their faults, and never again alluded to the pain they had caused him. "I am informed," writes the saint in his book *Preparation for Death*, "that the celebrated Signore Pietro Metastasio has published a little book in prose, in which he expresses his detestation of his writings on profane love and declares that, were it in his power, he would retract them and make them disappear from the world, even at the cost of his blood. I am told, that he lives retired in his own house, leading a life of prayer. This information has given me unspeakable consolation; because his public declaration and his most laudable example will help to undeceive many young persons who seek to acquire a great name by similar compositions on profane love. It is certain, that by his retraction, Signore Metastasio has deserved more encomiums than

he would deserve by the publication of a thousand poetic works: for these he might be praised by men, but now he is praised by God. Hence, as I formerly detested his vanity in priding himself on such compositions (I do not speak of his sacred pieces, which are excellent and deserving of all praise), *so now I shall never cease to praise him; and were I permitted, I would kiss his feet*, seeing that he has voluntarily become the censor of his own works, and that he now desires to see them banished from the whole world at the expense, as he says, *even of his own blood.*"

9. In reproving our neighbor great regard should be paid to his disposition. Sometimes a courteous little admonition, such as the reproving glance cast by our Lord at St. Peter, may be sufficient. In many cases it may be advisable to give the reproof in such a manner that it will appear rather as praise than blame.

"If a word chastises, cast the rod away,
If a look suffices, have no word to say."

10. Never reprove any one when you are excited. A physician who is suffering from delirium or any other violent disorder should be first cured himself before he attempts to prescribe for others.

11. The faults of those who sin more from weakness and ignorance than from any other reason, should move us to pity rather than to severity. We should kindly encourage them to amend their faults and avoid relapsing into them.

12. Whether we make corrections in public or in private, we should never use opprobrious expressions, such as fool, simpleton, and the like. We should seem to advise rather than to reprove, saying, for example: "Does

it not appear to you, that such and such a thing is an abuse? That whoever acts so, and so, exposes himself to censure?" This manner of acting is more convincing and effective than any other. Prudence, then, requires us to prefer it to a more arbitrary course.

13. We must not be astonished at seeing one troubled at a reproof, or taking it badly. If the culprit is wanting in humility, we must not, on this account, be wanting in charity by forgetting our christian dignity, and allowing aversions and ill-feelings to take root in our heart.

14. If a correction is to be given to a person whose dignity is to be respected, we should give it so as to reprove ourselves at the same time, speaking in the first person of the plural number, saying, for instance: "How much do we all offend God. We all have our faults, but we ought to be careful to avoid such and such faults."

15. There are certain persons who easily find fault with others. They themselves are generally the most guilty. It is one of their secret artifices to turn the eyes of others upon the faults of their neighbor, in order to keep them turned away from their own. You should never pay particular attention to what these great talkers say. Much less should you ever reprove any one without having given him a hearing. To believe what you hear without further inquiry, and reprove instantly, is to expose yourself to a thousand evils and agitations.

16. Generally speaking, it is not advisable to reprove one on the spot for his faults. Medicine must not be given to a person who is in high fever, except in extraordinary cases. You should take time to consider the matter before God, and to reflect on the best and most useful manner of making the correction, especially when

the fault is of a serious nature, and the offender is of a hasty temperament. Then when a favorable moment presents itself, ask with all humility and confidence, the guilty person to be kind enough to allow you, though full of faults yourself, to call his attention to something for his own benefit.

In order to gain the affection and confidence of the offender, you may first praise modestly his good qualities. Then, place, with great delicacy, before him his fault, reminding him of its unhappy consequences, and propose to him the proper remedy. To this you may add, that you yourself were obliged to use this remedy in order to correct your own faults.

17. Never reveal the name of the person who reported the fault. Nay, if you have reason to fear that the guilty person may easily suspect the one that spoke of him and conceive a dislike for him, it is better to make no reproof, because peace and union with our neighbor should be preferred to every thing else.

18. Always conclude a reproof with some encouraging words, saying, for instance, that God allows such faults, in order to keep us humble and to increase our solicitude in acquiring virtue.

19. Under certain circumstances, it is advisable to give the admonition publicly without naming the guilty person. This should be done,

a. When the evil is deeply rooted ; for in this case it is not prudent to admonish individuals privately ;

b. When the offender has a good heart, but is too weak in virtue to take a reproof in the proper spirit ;

c. When it is to be feared that others may commit the same fault, if the warning is not given in public.

20. Correct the aged by way of sweet entreaty; for it is not very easy to manage them; they are not very flexible. The sinews of their soul as well as of their body have grown stiff. Hence the way of entreaty is the best manner of admonishing them.

21. Before giving a reprimand, recommend yourself to the Lord. Humble yourself in his presence and acknowledge that you are more faulty and, consequently, more blame-worthy than your neighbor.

St. Vincent de Paul says that those who are spiritually sick, ought to be more tenderly treated than those who are corporally sick. "I beg you," he wrote to a Superior who had notified him of the desire of a lay-brother to leave the Congregation, "to assist and encourage him to resist the temptation, but do it mildly and affectionately, seeming rather to advise than to reprove him, as is our custom." He also tells us, that although during his whole life, he gave a sharp reproof three times only, yet each time he was forced to regret it, because, notwithstanding the apparent just reason for reproving sharply, the correction proved fruitless, while on the contrary, those reproofs which he had given mildly, were always effective.

St. Juliana Veronica occupied the post of Mistress of Novices for several years. During this time she had two novices who were of a head-strong disposition. One of them received her charitable admonitions in such ill part, that they produced not the least amendment. She was therefore expelled by the Chapter. However, St. Veronica obtained for her, from the Blessed Virgin, the grace of being received into another convent, where she corrected her faults. The other novice forgot herself so far

as to strike her Mistress in the face, and with such violence as to bruise her lips. The holy woman, grieved at the scandal, and at the excommunication which the novice drew upon herself by this act, implored of God so earnestly her amendment that she shed tears of blood. For a time, the rebellious Sister did better, but her amendment was not permanent. One day, when she was again kindly reprov'd by St. Veronica for not fulfilling her duty, she felt so terribly provok'd, and pushed the saint so roughly that she would have fallen, had not those standing near her come to her assistance. The prudent Superior said nothing about the affair at the time, as she knew that a reproof would be useless, nay, even injurious, because the offender was under the influence of passion. She merely remarked to those who insisted upon the punishment of the novice, that it was necessary to have patience, and that her only grief was that God had been offended. At the next Chapter, however, she calmly reprov'd and punished the fault. The fruit of this moderation was, that the delinquent entered into herself, and blushing with confusion at the sin she had committed, performed the penance imposed upon her. From that time forward, she watched so carefully over herself, that she lived and died a true religious.

A short time after Father Lallemand had been appointed Rector of the College of Bourges, the brother baker came to him, one day, and rather rudely complain'd of having too much to do; he told the Rector to see to the matter and put some one else in his place. The Father calmly listened to him, and promised to relieve him. He then went himself quietly into the bake-house

and began kneading the dough with the greatest diligence. After the brother had become calm again, he returned to the bake-house, and found, to his great surprise, the Father Rector doing his work for him. He immediately threw himself at his feet and begged his pardon, being filled with confusion at his fault, and moved by the meekness and humility of so compassionate a Superior.

Father Lallemand acted thus on all similar occasions, so prudently using lenity that every one readily conceded to him whatsoever he desired. He used to say that experience daily taught him more and more, that discipline should be kept up in the Company with extreme mildness; that the Superiors ought to study to make themselves obeyed rather from love than from fear; that the way to maintain regularity is not by rigor and penances, but by the paternal kindness of the Superiors and their diligence in attending to the wants of inferiors; and in preserving and increasing in them the spirit of piety and prayer.

One day St. Vincent de Paul heard that one of his priests was too inactive during the missions, and that severity towards the people prevailed over charity in his sermons. He wrote to him as follows: "I write to you, dear Sir, to inquire your news and to communicate to you ours. How do you feel after your great fatigue? How many missions have you given? Do the people seem disposed to profit by your labors? Do these labors produce the desired fruit? It would be a great consolation for me to be informed in detail of all you have done. From other houses of the Congregation I have received good accounts, thanks be to God! Their labors are to

their great content blessed with happy results. The strength which God has given to Mr. N. is truly wonderful. For nine months he has been laboring in the country, and his missions, according to the Vicar-general, the religious of the place, and others, have done incalculable good. This result is ascribed solely, to the mildness and charity with which this gentleman seeks to win the hearts of these poor people. This induces me to recommend more earnestly than ever the practice of these virtues. If God deigned to bless our first missions, it was evidently on account of the kindness, humility and sincerity with which we treated every one. Yes, if God deigned to make use of the most miserable among us, that is of myself, to convert sinners and heretics, it was, as they themselves unanimously admitted, in consequence of the patience and benevolence with which I constantly acted towards them. Even the galley-slaves were won in this manner. When I dealt severely with them, all my efforts were vain, whilst, on the contrary, when I pitied them, praised their resignation, kissed their chains, sympathized with them in their misfortune, or told them that their sufferings were their purgatory in this life, they listened to me and took the necessary means to save their souls. I beg you, therefore, my dear Sir, to help me to thank God earnestly for these favors and to beg of Him to bestow the grace, upon all our Missioners, to act towards every one, privately and publicly, even towards the most hardened sinners, with meekness, charity and humility, and never to make use of wounding words, or bitter reproaches, or preach severe sermons. I doubt not, Sir, that as far as you are concerned, you will carefully avoid a manner of acting which is so exceedingly unbecoming

a Physician of souls, and which instead of winning hearts and leading them to God, only estranges and embitters them. Christ, our Lord, is the eternal delight of both angels and men: we must also try to be the delight of our fellow-creatures, so as to lead them to their eternal happiness."

Thus St. Vincent knew how to draw the attention of his priests to their faults and imperfections, without wounding their feelings. He excused them as far as he could, manifested his love and esteem for them, and reproved so modestly and humbly, that none ever felt abashed or discouraged, but, on the contrary, all were edified and encouraged by his very reproofs.

To the Superior of one of his houses, who greatly exaggerated the difficulties of his office, Vincent gave the following answer: "What you write to me is both true and not true. It is true in respect to those who do not like to be contradicted by any one; who wish every thing to be conducted according to their opinion and will; who desire to be obeyed by all without opposition or delay, and who would like to see their every command approved of. What you write is not true, however, in regard to those who consider themselves as the servants of others, and who, while they perform the duties of Superior, keep constantly in mind their model, Jesus Christ, who bore with the rudeness, jealousy, want of faith, and other faults of His disciples, and who said that He had come into the world not to be served, but to serve. You used formerly to go through your duties patiently, humbly and cheerfully, and I know well that your only design now in using these exaggerated expressions, is to explain your difficulties better and to induce me to remove you from your post of Superior."

It was, however, by no means the opinion of St. Vincent, that Superiors should connive at every thing in their subjects. He wished that the guilty should always be reprimanded and even punished, insisting, nevertheless upon the reproof being given in the spirit of meekness and in accordance with the above-quoted principles.

He was once told that one of his priests, a very zealous man, who at that time was the Superior of a Seminary, treated the Seminarians too harshly. In a letter to this priest, he reproves him in the following manner: "I believe all that you have written, quite as readily as if I had seen it with my own eyes, and I have too many proofs of your zeal for the good of the Seminary to doubt your words. For this very reason, I have withheld my judgment in regard to the complaints which have reached me of your severe government, until I should have learned from yourself the true state of things. In the meanwhile, I beg of you to reflect seriously upon the manner in which you act, and to resolve to correct, with the help of God's grace, whatever may be displeasing to Him in your conduct. Although your intention may be good, yet the Divine Majesty is offended, and the following are a few of the evil consequences of such conduct: "First, the Seminarians leave the house dissatisfied; virtue becomes distasteful to them; the consequence of which is, that they may fall into sin and ruin their souls; and this, merely because they were, by your severity, too soon forced out of the school of piety. Secondly, they talk against the Seminary and are the cause of others not going, who otherwise would have come to receive the instructions and graces necessary for their vocation. Thirdly, the bad reputation of one house easily reflects

upon all the others of the Society, paralyzing the members thereof in their ministry, so much so that the good which the Lord, until now, has deigned to perform by their instrumentality, immediately commences diminishing more and more. To say that, heretofore, you have not noticed these faults in your own person, betrays, no doubt, a want of humility on your part. For were you possessed of that degree of humility which Jesus Christ requires of Missionary Priests, you would not hesitate for a moment to believe, that you were the most imperfect of all and guilty of all these things. You would attribute to a hidden blindness your not noticing in yourself those defects which are so easily discovered by others, and for which you have already been reprimanded. I have learned, that you do not like correction. Should this be so, O! how much should you fear for yourself! How far does your virtue fall short of that of the Saints who annihilated themselves before the world and were rejoiced at seeing their little failings made known to others. Are we not to imitate Jesus Christ, who, notwithstanding His innocence, suffered the bitterest and most unjust reproaches, without even opening His mouth to avert the disgrace from His sacred person? My dear Sir, let us learn from Him to be meek and humble of heart. These are virtues which you and I must continually ask of Him, and to which we must always attend, in order not to be drawn away by the opposite passions, which make us destroy with one hand what we have built up with the other. May God enlighten us with His holy Spirit to discover our blindness and to submit to those whom He has given us for guides."

To the Superior of a mission-house, he wrote as follows: "God be praised that you went yourself to do what Mr. N. refused to do. It was very good that you preferred doing this, rather than insisting any longer upon obedience to your command. There are some people, who, although devout and pious, and having a great horror for sin, will still from time to time commit some faults through human frailty; we must bear with them, and not excite them still more. As God otherwise blesses this gentleman in the confessional, I think we ought to connive a little at his caprices, so much the more as they are of no serious nature. With regard to the other priest of whom you write, I hope that this word has escaped him from want of reflection, rather than from real malice. Even the most discreet when surprised by passion, may say something of which they soon after repent. Finally, there are men who show aversion to persons as well as to offices, but who still do much good. Alas! it cannot be otherwise; live with whom you please, you will still have something to suffer, as well as something to merit. I hope, that he, of whom I speak, will still be gained, if we use towards him charitable forbearance and kind corrections. Do pray for him, as I unceasingly do for your whole community."

To another Superior he wrote: "The priest of whom you make this report, is a pious man; he practises virtue, and before he entered our Congregation, he enjoyed a great reputation in the world. If he now manifests a restless spirit, meddling with temporal affairs and those of his family, and thus becomes a subject of annoyance to his brethren in religion, he must be borne with in meekness. If he had not this fault, he would have an-

other ; and if you had nothing to suffer, you would have no occasion to practise charity. Your Superiorship would, moreover, bear little resemblance to that of our Divine Redeemer who chose, for Himself, imperfect and uneducated disciples, both to manifest His charity and patience, and to give an example to those who have to direct others. I beseech you, my dear Sir, to imitate this Divine Model. From Him you will learn not only how to bear with your brethren, but also how to treat them, in order to free them more and more from their defects. Certainly on the one hand, we must not allow, through human interest, evils to increase or to take deeper root, but on the other hand we must try to remedy them by degrees and in a charitable manner."

To a priest who was in company with another on a distant mission, he wrote thus: "I hope that the goodness of God will bless your efforts, especially if charity and patience reign between you and your assistant. I beseech you, in the name of the Lord, to see that this be your principal care, because you are the elder and consequently the Superior. Bear, therefore, in patience whatever you may have to suffer on the part of your companion. Bear all, I say, so as interiorly to renounce your authority, and to be guided only by the spirit of charity. By this means Jesus Christ gained his Apostles and corrected them of their faults. You also will gain this good Priest by this means only. Have then a little regard for his character ; do not contradict him at the first moment, though you believe you have reason for so doing, but wait awhile and then give him a charitable remonstrance. Above all, take great care not to let any one perceive the least difficulty between him and

you, for you are exposed to the observation of all, and one single unkind look on your part, if noticed by the people, would make so bad an impression upon them as to paralyze all your labors. I hope you will follow my advice."

If all these admonitions and reproofs were, or seemed to be, of no avail, still Vincent did not lose courage, but continued to bear patiently, to pray, and to hope that God would, in the end, show mercy to these strayed sheep. This perseverance he also recommended to others. When Superiors of the different houses requested him to send such and such a priest to another house, he recommended patience to them, reminding them of the common lot of all men to have faults. If any of his subjects acted otherwise than he had told him, he would say only: "Sir, had you followed my advice, you would have succeeded better in your undertaking." Sometimes he would not say anything at all.

St. Francis de Sales was one evening visited by a nobleman. His servant forgot to put lights in the house and in the room of the prelate, so that the bishop was obliged to accompany the stranger to the gate, in the dark. The only reproof which the Saint made to the servant, consisted in this: "Do you know, my dear friend, that two little pieces of candle would have been of greater value to us to-day than ten dollars?" Once one of the servants of St. Francis de Sales returned home rather late at night, being quite intoxicated. He knocked at the door, but no one answered, all having gone to sleep. The Saint, who alone was still awake, went to open the door, and seeing that his servant was intoxicated to such a degree as not to be able to walk, he took him by the

arm and conducted him to his bed-room; there, after having undressed him and taken off his shoes and stockings, he laid him on his bed, covered him well and retired. The Saint, on meeting him alone next morning, said to him: "O, my dear friend, you were no doubt, very sick last night!" On hearing this the servant fell on his knees, and, bathed in tears, begged the prelate's pardon. The holy bishop touched by his sorrow, gave him, though a severe, yet a paternal reproof; he reminded him of the danger to which he exposed himself of losing his soul, and imposed upon him the penance of mixing a certain quantity of water with his wine at table. The culprit accepted the penance, and was, from that time, so faithful that he never again committed a similar fault.

"One day," says the bishop of Belley, "I was to preach at the Church of the Visitation. Being aware that our Saint would be present, and that a large concourse of people was expected, I felt a little personal anxiety on the occasion, and I prepared in good earnest. When we had retired to his house, and were alone together, 'Well,' he said, 'you have given general satisfaction to-day; people went away exclaiming, *mirabilia!* at your fine and elegant panegyric. I only met with one individual who was not satisfied.' 'What can I have said,' I replied, 'to displease this person? Well I have no desire to know his name.' 'But I, for my part,' said the Saint, 'have a great desire to tell it to you.' 'Who is he then, that I may endeavor to give him satisfaction?' 'If I had not great confidence in you, I should not name him; but as I know you well, I willingly do so. Do you see him here?' I looked around, and saw no one but himself. 'It is you, then,' I said. 'Myself,' he replied. 'Certainly,' I re-

joined ; 'I should have valued your approbation alone, more than that of the whole congregation. Thank God, I have fallen into the hands of one who wounds only that he may heal ! What, then, did you find fault with ? For I know that your indulgence will not excuse anything in me !' 'I love you too much,' he resumed, 'to flatter you ; and if you had loved our Sisters after this fashion, you would not have amused yourself in puffing up their minds, instead of edifying them ; in praising their state of life, instead of teaching them some humiliating and more salutary doctrine. It is with the food of the mind as with that of the body. Flattery is windy ; and windy food, like vegetables, is not nutritious. We ought, in preaching, to provide, not empty food, the memory of which perishes with its utterance, but meat which will endure to life everlasting. We must never, indeed, ascend the pulpit, without the special object of building up some corner or other of the walls of Jerusalem, by teaching the practice of a certain virtue, or the means of avoiding a certain vice ; for the whole fruit of preaching consists in making the people do away with sin and practise virtue. 'O Lord !' exclaimed David, 'I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted unto Thee.' 'What sort of conversion,' I retorted, 'could I preach to souls delivered from the hands of their enemies, the devil, the flesh, and the world, and serving God in holiness of life ?' 'You should have taught them,' he said, 'to take heed, since they stand, not to fall ; to work out their salvation according to the counsel of the Holy Spirit, with fear and trembling ; and not to be without fear, even with respect to sin forgiven. You described them to us as so many saints ; it costs you nothing to canonize the living.

You must not place pillows under elbows in this way, nor give milk to those who need bitter herbs and wormwood.' 'My object,' I said, 'was to encourage and fortify them in their holy undertaking.' 'We must encourage,' he replied, 'without running the risk of exciting presumption and vanity. It is always safer to humble our hearers, than to exalt them to high and admirable things above their reach. I feel persuaded, that another time you will be cautious in this respect.' The next day he made me preach at a Convent of the Nuns of St. Clare. He was present, and the congregation was not less numerous than on the preceding day. I took care to avoid the pit-fall he had pointed out to me; my discourse was very simple, both in words and ideas, aiming at nothing except edification. I proceeded with much method, and pressed home my subject. Our Saint, on our return, came to see me in my apartment, which, in fact, was his own; for when I was on a visit to him, he always gave me his room. After tenderly embracing me, he said, 'Truly, I loved you dearly yesterday, but much more to-day. You are, indeed, quite after my own heart; and if I am not much mistaken, you are also according to God's heart, who, I believe, has been pleased with your sacrifice. I could not have believed, you would have been so yielding and condescending. It is a true saying, that the 'obedient man shall speak of victory.' You have conquered yourself to-day. Do you know that most of your hearers said, 'To-day is very unlike yesterday,' and they were not as much pleased this time as the last; but the individual, who was not satisfied yesterday, is wonderfully pleased to-day. I grant you hereupon a plenary indulgence for all your past faults. You have fulfilled all my

wishes to-day ; and if you persevere, you will do much service for the Lord of the vineyard. Preaching must not seek its strength in the words and the notions of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. If you faithfully adhere to this method, God will give to your labors a full and honorable increase ; you will become prudent in the words of mystical wisdom, and will possess the science of the saints, the science that makes saints. What, after all, do we desire to know, save Jesus, and Jesus crucified.'”

One day Cardinal Cheverus learned that a parish priest was at open warfare with his parish. He went to the place with the view of re-establishing peace. The pastor in question was a man of irreproachable life and ardent zeal, but of an excitable disposition which sometimes hurried him beyond all bounds. It was from this defect that the dispute originated. A child had been brought to him for baptism whose godmother had neglected to make her Easter communion. Adhering rigidly to ancient regulations, he would not permit her to stand sponsor, which so exasperated the parents, that they refused to seek a substitute, preferring to leave their infant unbaptized. On his arrival, M. de Cheverus begged the pastor to withdraw his opposition ; but in vain. The Cardinal then directed one of the priests who accompanied him to perform the ceremony, in order that the poor child might no longer remain the victim of a quarrel. Irritated at this beyond all self-control, the pastor gave the most insulting language to his archbishop. The meek prelate opposed nothing but silence and calmness to the storm. He repaired to the church, where he ascended the pulpit and invited all the parishioners

to peace and union with their parish-priest, on whom he pronounced an elaborate eulogium, detailing all the good qualities of which he was possessed. "You have," he said, "but one complaint to make of him; he has, you say, a hasty and violent temper; alas! my friends, who is without defects? If I were to remain twenty-four hours among you, you would perhaps discover so many faults in me that you would not be able to tolerate me: you see but one in your pastor; forgive then that single fault in consideration of so many virtues." Having finished his discourse, the Cardinal went to the sacristy, where he found the priest, abashed and ashamed, and, embracing him with the utmost kindness, he said: "My dear friend, I love you with my whole heart; how shall we begin the service?" Seeking by this means to do away with the recollection of the offence which had been committed, and prove his condescension in regard to every thing which was not inimical to his duty. The service over, the Cardinal called upon those of the parishioners who were the most embittered against the pastor, and spoke to them so impressively that they declared themselves ready to do whatever he wished. The reconciliation was forthwith accomplished; the kiss of peace was given, all sat down to the same table, and every heart was united in that of the Archbishop. Thus did he everywhere spread the dominion of charity, and illustrate by his example the words of the Apostle: "Charity is sweet and patient, not hasty to anger, but pardoneth and suffereth much."

St. Alphonsus' manner of correcting may be seen from the following letter, which he addressed to a Superior, of his Congregation: "To speak with all freedom, I re-

mark above all, that I do not believe that your Reverence wishes me to treat you with too much consideration, in regard to obedience, and as a subject, weak in virtue, to whom nothing can be said for fear of giving offence. I have a better opinion of your Reverence, and I believe that you desire what is best and most pleasing to God. Now let me tell what I desire to see in you. Your Reverence knows how much I have always esteemed you; I have given you proofs of this on several occasions. It would pain me very much were I to be told, as sometime ago, that your Reverence is a holy man indeed, but unfit for the rectorship for the following reasons:— first, because, when Superior, you would be seldom at home; secondly, that you would at the same time busy yourself with too many affairs, write too many letters, trouble yourself about so many things that would not concern you, and introduce so many devotions to which you seem to be attached that the regular observance of the rule would soon suffer. I know of course, and every one acknowledges, that your Reverence does not go out for the sake of pleasure, or for some other similar reason, but from the motive of pleasing God in every thing; but *ne quid nimis!* Now that you are in the Congregation, and especially now that you have been made rector, you must be convinced, that you can do nothing more conducive to the glory of God, than to take good care of the well-being and regular observance of your community which is one of the most fervent, nay, even the most fervent of all we have. The number of your subjects being small at present, this regularity cannot be so perfect as yet; however, you must endeavor to make it as perfect as circumstances will allow. As regards going

out, your Reverence knows from your own experience, that if the head be wanting, all the rest is in disorder Nevertheless, I do not forbid you to go out on an important affair for the good of the house or the Congregation, or when the greater glory of God is in question ; but should your Reverence wish to take part in all that contributes to the glory of God in your diocese, you could never be at home. The greatest glory you can render to God is the accomplishment of his holy will. I repeat it therefore, henceforth, your Reverence must mind only the good of the house and the Church, *Mater Domini* ; and the regular observance of the rule, that none of the things may come true which some have predicted of your Reverence. I speak with all charity, because I esteem you, and esteem you very much, and because I have a good opinion of you, trusting that you belong to the number of those who endeavor to sanctify themselves in the Congregation like Fathers Cafaro, Villani, Mazzini and others, who have renounced their own will ; and that you do not resemble those who wish to be treated too delicately, and whom I will treat thus, but of whom I foresee that they will never sanctify themselves, because they do not obey blindly."

2. *To instruct the ignorant.*

No doubt, there are many poor creatures around you, who labor and suffer and weep, and, in their blindness and despair, curse the loving God who created them ; blaspheme the God who died for them ; and hate the holy Church which he established in order to save them. And among these restless, wandering souls, you often find noble, generous hearts. Many are wavering between good and evil, many of them struggle, at least at times, against their

passions. They are groping about in the dark. A kind word, a friendly advice, might save them. Many of them are like the poor paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. They are so near the source of life, they long to reach it; but they find no one to take them by the hand and lead them thither. And one soul brought thus to God will be the means of leading others to God, and so the good will go on till the day of judgment.

Kevelin Digby, author of the "Ages of Faith," who did so much to awaken what was afterwards called the "Oxford Movement," was led to the Catholic faith by means of the barber who used to shave him when he was a member of the University. The barber began to instruct him, in the broken conversations occurring from day to day. Then he lent Mr. Digby books, and the barber thus became the teacher of the University man.

Ah! rest assured that every one, no matter in what state of life he is placed, will find opportunities to instruct the ignorant if he is zealous enough to perform this spiritual work of mercy.

A child passes you on the road. Why pass it by as coldly as if you did not see it? Salute the child kindly; speak to it. Ask, for instance, if it goes to school and where; if it can read, can pray; who is "Our Father" in heaven? You can thus give the child a short instruction! You cast the seeds of eternal life into its heart—seeds that will one day ripen with God's grace and bear fruit a hundred-fold. And even should the seed choke and wither in the child's heart, your eternal reward in heaven will not be lost. Your guardian angel has written down the good deed. If even a cup of cold water given in our Lord's name shall be rewarded, how much more an act of charity done to the soul.

A neighbor's child comes to your house—perhaps to play with your children. Of course, should the child teach your little ones bad words or anything that is wrong, you must send it away or correct it. But if the child is well disposed, treat it kindly ; you have a good opportunity to do an act of charity to that child's soul. Do not imagine that the child comes there merely by accident. It is its angel that sends it, that you may instruct it, that you may teach it how to reach its heavenly home. Show the little one some pious pictures. Tell it something about our Saviour, about the Blessed Virgin, about the angels. Teach it how God sees it every moment, in the darkest night as well as in broad daylight.

You are living with a Protestant family. You edify them by your conduct. They are in doubt about their religion, or ridicule yours on certain occasions. Profit by these occasions, and tell them the most important truths of our religion. Be not afraid to do so. Our Lord makes use of you to convert that family if they are sincere before God.

Not long ago a poor but worthy Irishman came to the door of a respectable Protestant family, and asked for any employment that would secure his daily bread. He was engaged for some service on the farm, and gave satisfaction. But being a Catholic he was held in contempt in that part of this country. As he seemed utterly devoid of even the first elements of education, it was thought that an attack upon his religion would not only result in amusement from his ridiculous answers, but in an easy triumph over his evident ignorance. He was accordingly questioned and bantered on the "objectionable" points of his creed by the most intelligent member of the house-

hold. But the good man, though ignorant of most other things, had been thoroughly instructed in his catechism; and this alone would have made him more than a match for a score of divines from Princeton or Geneva. His answers were so calm, so clear and correct, so logical, and, finally, so impressive, that the tables were soon turned and the laugh, or the defeat rather, proved to be on the wrong side. The questioner was not only vanquished but dismayed and terrified into the conviction that answers so simple, yet so cogent and logical must rest on some basis of truth. This brought about a serious examination of Catholic doctrine, and the examination was followed by submission to the Church. This conversion happily led to that of the whole family and of many others. These facts are well known throughout the county and State where they happened. (American Cath. Quart. Review, October, 1879, p. 723.)

3. *To counsel the doubtful.*

It often happens that a person is doubting as to whether a thing is lawful or not, whether this or that action is forbidden or allowed. On both sides he sees plausible reasons, which make an impression; but amongst these reasons there is none that draws down the weight, none that is sufficient to ground a determination. Thus, wavering between these different and opposite reasons, he remains undetermined and dares not make a decision for fear of being deceived and of falling into sin. Now that person is not allowed to act with such a doubtful conscience. He must seek for light and instruction, if he can.

An heir, for example, has entered upon an estate which was formerly unjustly acquired by his ancestors; but, at the time he accepted it, he had no knowledge, no doubt

concerning its unjust acquisition. Afterwards he discovers a flaw in his title, and for good reasons begins to doubt as to whether he lawfully possesses the property.

There is another. He doubts as to the state of life to which God calls him. There is a Protestant; for good reasons he has doubts as to the possibility of being saved in the Protestant religion. Now to counsel aright such persons, is to perform a spiritual work of mercy. For want of knowledge, or discretion, or some other reason, it may not be in your power to perform this kind of work of mercy. But you know, perhaps, a learned and charitable man who is competent to advise properly the doubtful. Now by referring to such a man, a person who has doubts of conscience, you share in the spiritual work of mercy—the good advice which is given.

4. *To comfort the sorrowful.*

Great, very great indeed, is the number of those who feel desolate and sorrowful. Some are desolate on account of the loss of temporal goods; others, on account of the loss of a dear parent, husband, wife, a darling child; a true, faithful friend; others, are desolate on account of scrupulosity; others, on account of spiritual dryness and so on.

It happened not long ago, that the parents, husband, and several children of a good mother died in the time of an epidemic. The good woman felt quite desolate, and, as it were, forsaken by God and man. Her means were all exhausted, and she saw no way of supporting herself and two little children. She could neither eat nor sleep. She wept day and night, and was reduced to a mere skeleton. One day she went to see an old friend, who, some years previous, had suffered in the

same way. To her she poured out her heart. After she had communicated all her afflictions of body and soul, her friend, a true servant of God, spoke to her in the following manner: "I sympathize with you more than I can tell you. I feel your crosses as if they were my own. I have suffered in the same way some years ago. At first, I found it very difficult to be resigned to the holy will of God. I went to see my confessor, who is a true, faithful father of the sorrowful and afflicted. I have never forgotten his consoling words, and I have often repeated them for the consolation of those who, in their affliction, came to see me. They are as follows: 'My dear child,' said he, 'the Lord treats you as one of his best children. He has deprived you of what was most near and dear to you; now you are poor and desolate. But now it is that you can say in truth: Our Father, who art in heaven.'

"As long as you are poor, you feel more dependent on God. You become thereby more closely united to God. It is, then, really a clear mark of his love when God takes away from you the goods of this world. He loves you. He is a jealous God. He wishes to take entire possession of your heart, of all your affections, and, therefore, he weans you from all things in this world, lest you should love them too much. God foresees that, if you were rich, and could enjoy the pleasures of this world, you would perhaps soon forget him, you would fall into grievous sins and be lost. He, therefore, deprives you of the dangerous gift of riches, just as you take away a sharp knife from the hands of your child. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of divine Love and He is called 'The Father of the Poor.' He is the Father

of the Poor, precisely because He is infinite Love. How consoling is this thought! Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, wherewith shall we be clothed? . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." (Matt. vi., 31-32.)

"You say that you have to suffer. That is true; but who is there, in this world that does not suffer? There is *not one*. There is no man on earth without some trouble, whether he be beggar, Pope or king. You envy, perhaps, that rich man who steps so grandly out of his carriage, who is bowed into his splendid residence by a retinue of servants; but could you only look into his heart, you would, perhaps, see there a load of care and misery, compared to which, all your troubles are as nothing. Believe me, the gorgeous palaces of the rich, are too often but the gilded prisons of weary hearts. Remember that you cannot cure a sick man by clothing him in a costly robe of silk and diamonds, and neither can you cure a sick, weary heart with all the wealth in the universe.

But you will ask perhaps why has God given one kind of suffering to you, and another kind to another man? If you wish to know this, then look up to heaven. Remember, your loving Father in heaven knows what is best for you. He will explain it all to you on the last day. And if you think you have to suffer more than others, then remember that suffering is a sign of God's love. "God loveth those whom He chastiseth. He chastiseth every child that He adopteth." (Prov., iii., 12.)

God is also now your friend and protector. Holy Scripture assures us that "God is the refuge of the Poor." (Ps. ix., 10.) "The poor man cries to God," says the

Holy Ghost, "and God hears and delivers him." (Ps. xxxiii., 7.) In this world, even your best friends grow tired, if you appeal to their charity too often; but God acts far otherwise. He never grows tired. He is never annoyed, no matter how often you ask Him for help. His ear is ever open to your prayers. He is ever ready to assist you in your necessities. But you will say: "How can I consider God as my friend? He has treated me rather like an enemy. I was once well off. I was happy. Now I am poor; sometimes I scarcely know where to find bread for my poor hungry children." Ah! why do you not understand the ways of God? Were you then richer than Job was? Certainly not; and yet God took away from him, all that he had. God took away his health, his property, his children. God afflicted him with a very powerful and loathsome disease. Job was thrown out of house and home; he was cast upon a dunghill. His friends, the very wife of his bosom, turned against him, accused him unjustly, and loaded him with insult. Now why did God afflict Job in this manner? Precisely because God loved him. God wished to draw him more closely to himself and to make him perfect. Job knew this well, and, therefore, in the midst of his afflictions, he said: "If we have received good things from the hand of God, why not receive evil also." (Job, ii., 10.) "Even though the Lord should kill me, I will trust in him." (Job, xiii., 15.)

"St. Lidwine, the daughter of very poor parents, was a great sufferer for many years. She was covered from head to foot, with most painful ulcers. In some of these ulcers, as many as two hundred little worms could be counted. Her flesh came off in pieces. She

was lying, not on a soft bed, but on a rough board, and stretched out there for thirty eight years. She could move only her head and left arm. She suffered from dropsy, acute head-ache, tooth-ache, and most violent fevers. For want of sufficient clothes, she was, in winter, quite benumbed with cold. Her tears froze on her cheeks. In the last year of her life she had to endure one of the most painful sufferings that can affect the human frame. It caused her such violent pains that she was forced to gnash her teeth, and often fainted away. She slept no more than half an hour in the year.

“Besides these sufferings she had to endure the ill-treatment of wicked people. One day an infuriated woman entered the room of the saintly virgin, and began to abuse her in the most shameful manner. She heaped upon her the most disgraceful insults and reproaches. She spat in her face, and raised such a loud out-cry that the whole neighborhood was disturbed. Another time, four brutal soldiers entered the chamber of the afflicted maiden and began to speak to her in a most insulting manner. They struck her repeatedly with the most barbarous cruelty.

“Now, in all her bodily sufferings, Lidwine was patient and resigned. In the midst of insults, she was like a tender lamb before a ravenous wolf, bearing with a calm countenance the insulting behavior of brutal men. Whence did she derive this superhuman patience, calmness and resignation in all her sufferings and trials? It was from the consideration that by patience she would atone for her sins, satisfy God’s justice, and gain an everlasting crown in heaven. Indeed, by her heroic patience, she became one of the most extraordinary saints of the Church of God.

'O Lord!' she exclaimed, 'it is most pleasing to me that thou dost not spare me, nor withhold thy hand in overwhelming me with suffering, for my greatest comfort is to know that thy will be done in me.'

"Our divine Savior says when you are invited to a feast take the lowest place, so that when the master of the house comes, he may say to thee: 'Friend, go up higher;' and you shall be honored in the eyes of all that are present. (Luke xiv., 10.) Here in this world, you have perhaps the lowest place. Be patient; do not murmur; and when the Lord comes at the end of the world, he will say to you in presence of the whole universe: 'Friend go up higher now; the first shall be the last; and the last shall be the first;' and you shall be glorified before the angels and saints of heaven. God assures us that he is himself the defender of the poor, and he threatens the oppressors of the poor with the severest chastisements. 'Do no violence to the poor,' he says; 'and do not oppress the needy; for the Lord will judge his cause and he will afflict those that afflict his soul.' (Prov. xxii., 22.)

"Our Lord Jesus Christ is also now more than ever your brother. Look at the life of our Lord. He is the king of heaven and earth, and yet he has become the poorest of the poor. He is born in a stable. Was there ever a poorer place to be born in? He lived on earth as a poor carpenter's son. He had no home of his own, no place to rest his weary head. 'The birds of the air have their nests,' he says—'even the foxes have their lairs, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' He suffered hunger and thirst. Sometimes he was even compelled to break off a few ears of wheat as he passed through the field in order to satisfy the cravings of hun-

ger. Now that you are in want, do not lose confidence. Look up to Jesus, and say to him: 'O Jesus, remember that thou wert once as poor as I am now. Have pity on me then and help me. But if thou wishest me to follow thee yet longer on the road of poverty and suffering, O then give me grace to do so cheerfully!'

"It is also now that you are of the number of those to whom the Gospel is preached, that is, to the poor. Our dear Saviour himself assures us of this: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me, to preach the Gospel to the poor.' (Luke, iv., 18.) And it is to the poor that he still preaches, through the ministry of his holy Church. It is precisely the poor that crowd our churches, and listen eagerly to the words of God: It is especially the poor that crowd the churches during Holy Mass. It is the poor that are found praying in the church, during the long day, and in the silence of the night. It is they, who come to adore our blessed Lord in the Sacrament of his love. It is they who visit him in his little crib at Christmas; and who weep with compassion when they hear the recital of his sufferings. It is especially the poor who press forward to the altar, hungering for the bread of life. It is they who are so proud to take part in a holy procession, whether in the church or in the street. Yes, the Catholic Church is proud of the poor; and as our Lord Jesus Christ himself declared, "the poor are always with her."

"The holy martyr St. Lawrence was commanded by the tyrant to show him the treasures of the church. St. Lawrence obeyed. He led the tyrant to the church, and pointing to a large crowd of poor persons who were waiting for alms, he said: 'See, here are the treasures of the Catholic Church.' Yes, the poor are a mark of the true

Church of Christ. When our blessed Saviour went back to heaven, he left the poor to take his place here on earth. He says to every one of us: 'Whatever you do to one of these poor persons, you do it to me.'

"As you are now poor and desolate, God will also be your sure rewarder. He makes more account of the little alms of the poor than he does of the grand contributions of the rich. One day, Our Blessed Lord saw a poor widow putting a few pence into the treasury of the temple. He saw also the rich Pharisees offering their gifts. Now what did Jesus Christ say of this poor woman? Listen to his consoling words: 'Amen, I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury.' (Mark, xii., 43.) O, what a consolation for the poor! That poor widow went away, little thinking who was watching her. Her's was indeed a poor offering, a mere trifle; but it was the best she had, and she gave it with a cheerful heart. O, how great is her reward! Wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the wide world, her praise is uttered; and her praise shall resound throughout all eternity in heaven. O, what a consoling example is this for you! You give small sum in alms, or for some other charitable object; or you make a little sacrifice, some act of kindness to your neighbor. Men do not esteem that deed of charity. Perhaps the very one to whom you have done that favor, does not notice it, or soon forgets it; but God sees that good deed, he sees the good will with which you give that alms, and he remembers it: it is written down in the book of life. He shall proclaim it before the whole world on the last day, and he shall reward you for it throughout a long, endless eternity. 'Amen, I declare to you,'

he says, 'that even a cup of cold water given in my name shall have its reward.' And then the prayers of the poor! O how powerful are they! how pleasing to God! The prayers of the poor pierce the clouds; they ascend like a mighty voice to the ear of God, and they do not depart until they are heard. Blessed is he for whom the poor are continually praying; he is almost certain of his salvation.

"Now that you are poor and desolate, the gates of heaven are open to you. 'Blessed are the poor,' says Jesus Christ, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' And the Apostle St. James says: 'Hath not God chosen the poor to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven.' (James, ii., 5.) Yes, if you are poor and resigned to the will of God, you can say in truth with Tobias of old: "Fear not, my children; you lead indeed a life of poverty, but you shall have an abundance of good things, if you fear God, avoid sin and do good. The state of poverty frees you from many temptations, and makes it easy for you to gain heaven. Bear, then, courageously all your privations. When the hour of hardship comes, when you are tempted to murmur against God, when you are tempted to despair, then remember the consoling words of our Lord: 'Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.'

"You are now in want. Remember that a throne awaits you in heaven. You live in a poor miserable hut! Remember that there are many mansions in the home of your heavenly Father, and one of these mansions is prepared for you. Poverty compels you to live in an unhealthy neighborhood; cruel death has snatched away several beloved members of your family. Even the worse has come; your heart has been crushed within you at see-

ing a dear father and mother, darling brothers and sisters, and children carried out in their coffin, one by one ; you are alone and desolate in this wide world. Ah, look up ; raise your eyes to heaven ! See they are standing at the gates of heaven to meet you with out-stretched arms : father, mother, brother, sister, and the sweet little babies whose death rent your heart in twain. See they are all smiling upon you, they are waiting to welcome you home to heaven. Your heart is heavy and sorrow-stricken here below ; remember, in heaven you shall enter into eternal, unbounded joy. There shall be no weeping, or sighing, or sorrow any more, for God shall wipe away every tear and heal every broken heart. Gaunt hunger sits every day at your poor table ? O, have courage ! In heaven you shall sit at the eternal banquet of the Saints. You are poorly clothed ; your tattered garments call forth the heartless sneer of some unfeeling neighbor ? Do not be discouraged ; in heaven you shall be crowned with a kingly diadem ; you shall be clothed with the costly robes which the angels and saints of heaven wear. Your friends have deserted you ; you are a poor, homeless exile upon the face of the earth ; see, God is your friend ; a true and ever faithful friend, and a home of never-ending happiness awaits you in heaven. Here your hands have grown rough from hard labor ; your whole body has been worn out by sickness and suffering ! Ah ! have courage ! in heaven your body shall shine brighter and more glorious than the noon-day sun. Here you are ignorant and suffer much on account of it ; but have patience ; in heaven you shall know every thing, you shall be filled with heavenly wisdom ; you shall behold the Eternal God face to face, and in Him you shall see all things. In all your joys or

sorrows then turn your eyes constantly towards your true home; look up to heaven, to the mansion of your Father, the palace of His glory, the temple of His holiness, and the throne of His grandeur and magnificence, the land of the living, the centre of your rest, the term of your movements, the end of your miseries, the place of the nuptials of the Lamb, the feast of God and His holy angels. O holy Sion, where all remains and nothing passes away: where all is found, and nothing is wanting; where all is sweet, and nothing bitter; where all is calm, and nothing is agitated! O happy land whose roses are without thorns; where peace reigns without combats and where health is found without sickness, and life without death! O holy Thabor! O palace of the living God! O heavenly Jerusalem, where the poor sing eternally the beautiful canticles of Sion!" It is thus the good priest spoke to me, said the pious woman; I have felt happy ever since. May his words also strengthen and comfort you in all your trials.

5. *To bear wrongs patiently.*

We live in a world of iniquity and injustice, in a world where, from the beginning, the good have been wronged and persecuted by the wicked. Lucifer and his angels rebel against God, and fight against St. Michael and his angels. In the family of Adam, Cain slays his brother Abel. In the family of Abraham, Ismael persecutes Isaac. In the family of Isaac, Esau persecutes Jacob. In the family of Jacob, Joseph is sold into Egypt by his brethren. In the family of David, Absalom persecutes Solomon. Our Lord Jesus Christ is betrayed by one of his Apostles. In the Church of Christ, the Roman emperors persecute the Apostles and their successors for over three hundred

years. In the Franciscan Order, St. Francis of Assisium is persecuted by brother Elias. In the Cistercian Order, St. Bernard is persecuted by his uncle Andrew. In the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, St. Alphonsus is calumniated and reviled by Father Leggio. In the kingdom of God on earth, heresy and infidelity constantly oppose orthodox faith. In all places, the wicked wrong the good. Where is a country, a city, a village, or a family, where injustice is not found in opposition to justice? "Because I have loved justice," exclaimed St. Gregory on his death bed, "I die in exile."

"There must be scandals," says our Lord. God permits the elect, for their greater perfection, to be persecuted by the wicked. "Good is set against evil, and life against death: so also is the sinner against the just man. And so look upon all the works of the Most High. Two and two, and one against another." (Ecclus. xxxiii., 15.)

Now, it is by bearing patiently all kinds of wrong that we become more and more like unto God, and belong to that happy number of christians of whom our Lord says: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v., 10.)

For over three hundred years the Irish people have suffered, struggled, and died for the faith. They suffered poverty with all its bitterness. They endured exile with all its sorrows; they suffered outrage, and even death itself, rather than lose their God. The minions of hell enacted the fiendish penal laws, and soon that country, so rich and fruitful in colleges and convents, became one vast, dreary wilderness. In tracts of country thirty, forty, fifty miles in extent, the smoke from an inhabited house, as English chroniclers themselves declare, was nowhere to be seen.

The people had disappeared and left only skeletons in the land. The living were to be met only in the glens and dark caves of the mountains. There they dragged out a wretched existence, feeding on the weeds and garbage of the earth. Like shadows they moved about, haggard and wan, starving and wounded, and they endured the cruel pangs of hunger, till God, in his mercy, took them to a better world. Again and again were the harrowing scenes repeated. Ireland became prosperous again in spite of the most galling oppression; and the people of Ireland were again starved and massacred for their faith, and those that survived were shipped off to the British West Indies, and sold there as slaves. The British fleet was ordered around the coast. Over eighty thousand of the most influential and most distinguished of the Irish Catholics were packed on ship-board, and their bones have long since rotted in the soil of the English sugar-plantations of Jamaica.

The last effort of tyranny is still fresh in the minds of all—I mean the late famine years. There are, no doubt, some of my readers who have witnessed the appalling scenes of that gloomy period, and, once witnessed, they can never, never be forgotten. Ah! no. Like living fire, these horrid scenes burn into the memory, and leave there a horrid scar—a mark that can never be effaced. There were thousands and thousands wasting away and dying of hunger. They were falling and dying, as the leaves fall in autumn. The food that was sent to the poor people from America, was kept in the harbors until it rotted. And there, in sight of the famishing people, the wealthy, Protestant, overfed wives and daughters of the sleek, oily Protestant parsons, had plenty of food for their

cattle; they had food in abundance for their pet birds or their lap-dogs, whilst the poor starving Catholics wished to eat even the husks of the swine, and it was not given them.

A few years before that gloomy reign of terror, there lived near a certain town in Ireland a poor, honest farmer, with his wife and children. They were poor indeed, but were contented and happy. Never did the poor or the stranger pass their door without partaking of their hospitality; and what they had they gave with a willing heart. But the famine year came on. The good farmer was unable to pay the tithes. His little property was distrained. The police entered his farm; they seized his unreaped corn; they took his crops; they drove his cattle to the pound. The poor unhappy man himself was expelled from that little spot of earth on which he was born, where he had lived so long, and where he had hoped to die. He was turned into the public road, with his wife and children. No roof, no food, no clothing—he was cast, in beggary and nakedness, into the cold, heartless world. He sought for a shelter for his little ones. He sought for employment, but could find none. He was a Catholic. His neighbors around were bitter Protestants, of the blackest dye. They offered him shelter, food, and clothing, but on one condition—that he would apostatize.

O God! who shall tell the agony of that poor, heart-broken father? No hope to cheer him, save the hope of death; no eye to pity him save the all-merciful eye of God! He saw his poor wife dying before his eyes. He saw her wasting day by day—slowly pining away, while praying and weeping over her starving children. He heard his famished children crying for food, and their piteous

cries rent his very soul. Oh! he could help them, he could provide them food, clothing, and a pleasant home—but then he must apostatize, he must renounce his holy faith! Oh! what a sore trial, what a cruel martyrdom! His loving wife died before his eyes—died of hunger. She died with words of patience, words of hope, upon her lips. The poor husband wrung his hands in anguish. He bent over the lifeless form of his wife. Dark night was thickening around him—thickening even within him; he felt the cruel pangs of hunger gnawing at his very vitals. And were he not upheld by his holy faith, he would have yielded to despair. But the cries of his children roused him. He forgot for a moment his own sufferings. He took his two weak, starving babes in his trembling arms, and hurried away with tottering steps. He begged from house to house, from door to door; he begged for a crumb of bread for his poor, starving little ones; but not one gave him a morsel of food. They offered him food and clothing and shelter, if he would only apostatize, if he would give his children to be brought up in their false creed. “But,” cried the heart-broken father, “oh! how could I give my children to be brought up in a false creed and deny their holy faith? Oh! how could I sell their souls to the evil one for a mess of pottage?” After some time the unhappy man felt a heavy load weighing like lead upon his trembling arm. He looked. One of his poor babes had ceased moaning. It was dead—cold and stiff in death. The heart-broken father sat down beneath a tree by the wayside and prayed, but he could not weep. Ah! no; his eyes were dry, his heart was withered. In wild, passionate tones he called on Heaven to witness his agony—he called

God to witness that he did not wish the death of his children, that he would gladly lay down his life to save his family, but he could not—oh! no! no!—he could not deny his holy faith; he could not sell their souls to the devil. He tried once more to obtain some food for his remaining child, but in vain, and at last the poor, innocent sufferer gasped and died too in his arms. Ah! whose heart can remain unmoved at the sufferings of this good father and his children! And yet heaven was worth all this, and more too; for St. Paul has said with truth: “I reckon that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.”

6. *To forgive injuries.* (See above Q. 8.)

7. *To pray for the living and the dead.*

It is from the Lord's Prayer, or the “Our Father,” that we learn how pleasing it is to God to pray for others. In this prayer, Jesus Christ teaches us to pray not only for ourselves, but also for all our fellow-men. He teaches us in this prayer to ask for others the same graces which we ask for ourselves. He has also taught us, by his example, to pray for others. Indeed, we may say that his whole life was a continual prayer both for the just and sinners. “And not for them only [the Apostles] do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as thou Father in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John, xvii., 20, 11.)

“Pray one for another,” says St. James the Apostle, “that you may be saved.” (Epist. St. James, v., 15.) We are especially obliged to pray for the successor of St. Peter, our Holy Father the Pope, for the bishops and

clergy of the holy Catholic Church, and for all those who labor for the propagation of our holy faith. Jesus Christ himself has given us the example. "And now I am no more in the world; and these [the Apostles] are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we also are. . . . I do not ask that thou shouldst take them away out of the world, but that thou shouldst preserve them from evil. Sanctify them in truth. . . . Father, I will that where I am, they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me; that they may see my glory, which thou hast given me." (John xvii., 11, 15, 17, 24.)

If there is any one in the world, who needs your prayers, it is especially the priest. What our Lord says of St. Peter, applies to every priest, and to every just man. "Simon, Simon," said he, "behold satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." (Luke, xxii., 31-32.) The priest is surrounded by all kinds of dangerous temptations, contradictions, and crosses. His sacred duty is to lead souls to God, and daily and hourly to dispense the sacred treasures of God's grace. Now, why has the priest taken upon himself these fearful responsibilities? It is out of love for his fellow-men; it is to secure their eternal happiness. It is, then, your most sacred duty to make at least some return to the priest by offering for him your prayers.

But not only your gratitude to the priest should urge you to pray for him; your love for the holy Church also requires it. It is the greatest honor for God to have learned and virtuous priests; priests full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and this un-

speakable gift of God is obtained and maintained by the fervent prayers of the faithful.

And not only your love for the holy Church, but also your zeal for the salvation of souls should urge you to pray for the priest. A good priest is indeed the light of the world, the salt of the earth. He is the source of peace and blessings to hundreds and thousands.

Moreover, we should often recommend to God all poor sinners, schismatics, heretics and infidels. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when hanging on the cross and suffering the most excruciating pains, prayed for the greatest sinners, and his most bitter enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke, xxiii., 34.) "He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin, which is not unto death, let him ask, and life [life of grace] shall be given to him that sinneth not to death." (1. John, v., 15.)

Remarkable instances of sinners leaving their evil ways and returning to God, occur every day. No doubt their conversion is owing to the prayers of the just. "For God willingly hears the prayers of a Christian," says St. John Chrysostom, "not only when he prays for himself but also when he prays for sinners. Necessity obliges us to pray for ourselves, but charity must induce us to pray for others. The prayer of fraternal charity is more acceptable to God than that of necessity." (Chrysost. Hom. xiv., Oper. Imper. in Matt.) The prayer for sinners, says St. Alphonsus, is not only beneficial to them, but is, moreover, most pleasing to God; and the Lord himself complains of his servants who do not recommend sinners to him. He said one day to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "See, my daughter, how the christians are in the devil's hands; if my elect did not deliver them by their prayers,

they would be devoured." Inflamed with holy zeal by these words, this saint used to offer to God the blood of the Redeemer fifty times a day in behalf of sinners. "Ah!" she used to exclaim, "how great a pain it is, O Lord, to see how one could help thy creatures by dying for them, and not be able to do so!" In every one of her spiritual exercises she recommended sinners to God, and it is related in her life that she scarcely spent an hour in the day without praying for them; she even frequently arose in the middle of the night to go before the Blessed Sacrament, to offer prayers for them. She went so far as to desire to endure even the pains of hell for their conversion, provided she could still love God in that place, and God granted her wish by inflicting on her most violent pains and infirmities for the salvation of sinners; and yet after all this she shed bitter tears, thinking she did nothing for their conversion. "Ah, Lord, make me die," she often exclaimed, "and return to life again as many times as is necessary to satisfy thy justice for them!" God, as is related in her life, did not fail to give the grace of conversion to many sinners, on account of her fervent prayers. "Souls," says St. Alphonsus, "that really love God, will never neglect to pray for poor sinners."

How could it be possible for a person who really loves God, and knows his ardent love for our souls, and how much he wishes us to pray for sinners, and how much Jesus Christ has done and suffered for their salvation; how could it be possible for such a one, I say, to behold with indifference so many poor souls deprived of God's grace without feeling moved frequently to ask God to give light and strength to these wretched beings, in order that they may come out of the miserable state of spiritual death

in which they are slumbering? It is true, God has not promised to grant our petitions in behalf of those who put a positive obstacle in the way of their conversion; yet God, in his goodness, has often deigned, through the prayers of his servants, to bring back the most blind and obstinate sinners to the way of salvation, by means of extraordinary graces. Therefore, we should never fail to recommend poor sinners to God in all our spiritual exercises; moreover, he who prays for others will experience that his prayers for himself will be heard much sooner. In the life of St. Margaret of Cortona, we read that she prayed more than a hundred times a day for the conversion of sinners; and, indeed, so numerous were their conversions, that the Franciscan Fathers complained to her of not being able to hear the confessions of all those who were converted by her prayers.

The Curé of Ars, who died a few years ago in the odor of sanctity, relates the following in one of his catechetical instructions: "A great lady, of one of the first families in France, was here, and she went away this morning. She is rich, very rich, and scarcely twenty-three. She has offered herself to God for the conversion of sinners and the expiation of sin. She mortifies herself in a thousand ways, wears a girdle all armed with iron points; her parents know nothing of it; she is as white as a sheet of paper." (Spirit of Curé of Ars.)

The same saintly pastor said one day to a priest, who complained of not being able to change the hearts of his parishioners for the better: "You prayed, you wept, you sighed; but did you fast also? did you deprive yourself of sleep? did you sleep on the bare ground? did you scourge yourself? Do not think you have done all, if you have not yet done these penances."

If we do not love poor sinners that much, if we think it above our strength to perform similar penitential works for their conversion, let us at least do something; let us recommend them to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, or offer ourselves for a week or two as a holocaust to God, to be disposed of according to his good pleasure; let us suffer some cold, some heat, some inconvenience, some contradiction and contempt in silence; let us deny ourselves some agreeable visits, or other natural pleasures; or let us make a novena, or hear Mass daily for a week, and offer up our communions with this intention. We may be assured that by such exercises we shall give great pleasure to Jesus Christ, contribute much to the honor of his heavenly father, win his heart over to ourselves, force it sweetly to give the grace of conversion to many sinners, and obtain for ourselves a large share of divine grace.

If it is an excellent spiritual work of mercy to pray for the living, it is also a most praiseworthy spiritual work of mercy to pray for the dead. Before the coming of Christ, the Jews were the chosen people of God. They looked upon prayer for the dead as a holy and laudable work. They believed that, by offering up prayers for the dead, they could free the souls of the departed from their sins. We read, in the second book of the Machabees, a striking example of their charity towards the departed souls. About two hundred years before Christ, they gained a brilliant victory over the enemies of their religion. Now, as many of the Jews had been slain in the battle, Judas Machabeus, their valiant general, took up a collection, and sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for a sacrifice to be offered up in expiation of the sins of

the dead. The Holy Ghost praises the Jews for their charity towards the departed, by saying: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (II Machab., xii., 43.)

The souls in purgatory, those holy prisoners, and debtors to the divine justice are quite helpless. A sick man, afflicted in all his limbs, and a beggar in the most painful and destitute of conditions, has tongue left to ask relief. At least they can implore heaven—it is never deaf to their prayer. But the souls in purgatory are so poor that they cannot even do this. Those cases, in which some of them were permitted to appear to their friends and ask assistance, are but exceptions. To whom is it that they should have recourse? Is it perhaps to the mercy of God? Alas! they send forth their sighs in plaintive voices: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God." (Ps., xli., 1.) "Lord, where are thy ancient mercies." (Ps., lxxxviii., 50.) "I cry to thee, and thou hearest me not; I stand up, and thou dost not regard me. Thou art changed to be cruel toward me." (Job, xxx., 20–21.) But the Lord does not regard their tears, nor heed their moans and cries, but answers them that his justice must be satisfied to the last farthing.

Are they to endeavor to acquire new merits, and thereby purify themselves more and more? Ah! they know that their time for meriting is passed away, that their earthly pilgrimage is over, and that upon them is come that fatal *night in which no one can work*. (John, ix., 4.)

They know that by all their sufferings they can gain no new merit, no higher glory in heaven—they know, it is through their own fault that they are condemned to this state of suffering; they see clearly, how many admonitions, exhortations, inspirations and divine lights they have rejected, how many prayers, opportunities to receive the sacraments and to profit by the means of grace they have neglected through mere caprice, carelessness and indolence; they see their ingratitude towards God, and the deep wounds they made in the Sacred Heart of Jesus—and their extreme grief and sorrow for all this is a worm never ceasing to gnaw at them. It is a heart-rending pain, it is a killing torment for them, to know that they have put themselves wilfully and wantonly into this state of the most cruel and most lacerating pains! “O cruel comforts! O accursed ease!” they cry out, “it is on your account that we are deprived of the enjoyment of God, our only happiness for all eternity!”

Shall they console themselves by the thought that their sufferings will soon be over? But they are ignorant of the duration of their sufferings unless it be revealed to them by God. Hence it is that they sigh day and night, that they weep constantly and cry unceasingly: “Wo is to us, that our sojourn is prolonged!”

Shall these poor, helpless souls seek relief from their fellow-sufferers—all utterly incapable of procuring mutual relief? Lamenting, sobbing and sighing, shedding torrents of tears, and crying aloud, these poor souls stretch out their hands for one to help, console and relieve them. We are the only ones who have it in our power to assist them in their sufferings.

The souls in purgatory are holy souls. They are

confirmed in grace and no longer in a condition to offend God or to forfeit heaven. They love God above every thing; all their disorderly affections and passions have died away, and as they love God, so are they loved by him in an unutterable manner. For this reason, our Lord wishes that they should be united to him as soon as possible; but as he is a God most holy and most just, his holiness and justice forbid him to admit them into the city of the heavenly Jerusalem before their indebtedness to his divine justice has been fully discharged, either by their own sufferings or by the prayers and good works of their brethren on earth. To remove, then, by our charity this bar to the divine goodness, and to assist these souls in being sooner united to the angelic choirs and the number of the blessed in heaven, there to love, praise and glorify God in a most perfect manner, cannot but be a work most pleasing and most acceptable to the Almighty. "I was hungry," He will say to the elect on the day of judgment, "and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me: sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me." And when the just will ask the Lord upon what occasion they acted thus toward him, he will answer: "Amen, I say to you: so long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren. you did it to me." (Matt., xxv., 34-40.) Truly, if our Lord so highly values the least act of charity, what value will he not set on that charity which freed from their expiatory place such souls as were already espoused to him for all eternity.

We read in the life and revelations of St. Gertrude, that she one day inquired of our Lord why the recital of

the Psalter for the souls of the departed was so agreeable to him, and why it obtained so great a relief for them, since the immense number of psalms and the long prayers after each, caused more weariness than devotion. Our Lord replied: "The desire which I have for the deliverance of the souls of the departed, makes it acceptable to me; even as a prince who had been obliged to imprison one of his nobles, to whom he was much attached, and was compelled by his justice to refuse him pardon, would most thankfully avail himself of the intercession and satisfaction of others to release his friend. Thus do I act towards those whom I have redeemed by my death and precious blood, rejoicing in the opportunity of releasing them from their pains and bringing them to eternal joy." "But," continued the Saint, "is the labor of those who recite this Psalter acceptable to thee?" He replied: "My love makes it most agreeable to me; and if a soul is released thereby, I accept it as if I had been myself delivered from captivity and I will assuredly reward at it a fitting time, according to the abundance of my mercy."—(Chap., xvi.)

St. Gertrude never felt happier than on the days on which she had prayed much for the relief of the souls in Purgatory. One day she asked our Saviour why it was that she felt so happy on those days. "It is," he replied, "because it would not be right for me to refuse the fervent prayers which you on these days pour out to me for the relief of my suffering spouses in purgatory." "It is not right for me," says Jesus Christ, "to refuse the prayers which you address to me in behalf of my captive spouses." How consoling, then, and at the same time, how encouraging must it be to remember in our prayers the poor sufferers of purgatory!

Dinocrates, the brother of St. Perpetua, died at the age of seven years. Now, one day when St. Perpetua was in prison for the sake of faith, she had the following vision: "I saw Dinocrates," she says, "coming out of a dark place, where there were many others exceedingly hot and thirsty; his face was dirty, his complexion pale, with the ulcer in his face of which he died; and it was for him that I prayed. There seemed a great distance between him and me, so that it was impossible for us to meet each other. Near him stood a vessel full of water, whose brim was higher than the stature of an infant. He attempted to drink, but though he had water, he could not reach it. This mightly grieved me, and I awoke. By this I knew my brother was in pain, but I trusted I could, by prayer, relieve him; so I began to pray for him, beseeching God, *with tears, day and night*, that He would grant me my request, as I continued to do till we were removed to the camp-prison. The day we were in the stocks, I had this vision: I saw the place, which I had beheld dark before, now luminous; and Dinocrates, with his body very clean and well clad, refreshing himself, and, instead of his wound, a scar only. I awoke and I knew he was relieved from his pains."—(Butler's Lives of the Saints, March 7.)

After St. Ludgardis had offered up many fervent prayers for the repose of the soul of her deceased friend, Simeon, abbot of the monastery of Tonic, our Lord appeared to her saying: "Be consoled, My daughter, on account of thy prayers I will soon release this soul from purgatory." "Oh Jesus, Lord and Master of my heart," she rejoined; "I cannot feel consoled so long as I know that the soul of my friend is suffering so much in the

purgatorian fire ! Oh ! I cannot help shedding most bitter tears until Thou hast released this soul from her sufferings." Touched and overcome by this tender prayer, our Lord released the soul of Simeon, who appeared to Ludgardis, all radiant with heavenly glory, and thanked her for the many fervent prayers which she had offered up for his delivery. He also told the saint that, had it not been for her fervent prayers, he should have been obliged to stay in purgatory for eleven years. (Life 1. i., 4) "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought," says Holy Writ, "to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins."—(II. Machabees, xii., 46.)

The relief, however, which the souls in purgatory receive from our prayers, is in proportion to the fervor with which we say them. This was one day expressly declared by our Lord to St. Gertrude when asking Him "How many souls were delivered from purgatory by hers and her sisters' prayers?" "The number," replied our Lord, "is proportioned to the zeal and fervor of those who pray for them." He added: "My love urges me to release a great number of souls for the prayers of each religious, and at each verse of the psalms which they recite, I release many." Although the souls of the departed are much benefited by these vigils and other prayers, nevertheless a few words, said with affection and devotion, are of far more value to them. And this may be easily explained by a familiar comparison; for it is much easier to wash away the stains of mud or dirt from the hands by rubbing them quickly in a little warm water, than by pouring a quantity of cold water on them without using any friction; thus, a single word, said with fervor and devotion, for the souls of the departed, is of

far more efficacy than many vigils and prayers offered coldly and performed negligently.

What a soothing satisfaction to the heart is not prayer for the dead ! It changes tears, heretofore barren, into works of piety and mercy ; causes our sorrow to be a succor to the object of our love, and makes it, therefore, less bitter ; it establishes and maintains, between ourselves and those who leave us, the most pleasing and salutary relations—a continual exchange of services and of precious help. Admirable relations between the living son and the departed father, between the mother and the daughter, the husband and the wife, between life and death ! While I share what I have to spare with the poor, God, to recompense me, will withdraw my father, my mother, my friend, from a place of suffering. That same penny which goes to give his daily bread to a poor sufferer, will perhaps give to a delivered soul a place for all eternity at the table of the Lord.

What heart does not thrill at such a thought ! Who among us does not see one of those most near and dear to us in life, appear to exhort us to the work of prayer and the labors of virtue ? Who does not exclaim, when watering with his tears the tomb of a beloved one : “ O beloved soul, whom so many virtues and good works have recommended to the clemency of the great Judge ! whom so many sufferings have so long tried and purified before my eyes ! whom a death, so very bitter indeed, but sanctified by religion and consoled by its hopes, has so quickly withdrawn from my embraces !—I hope for thy everlasting salvation, from the divine goodness and merits of Jesus Christ : but I know not if it is yet consummated by thy entrance into glory. In this uncer-

tainty I pray for thee, and I unite to my prayers the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which I daily offer upon his altar. My prayer made effectual by our Saviour's blood relieves thee if thou art still suffering ; it obtains for myself the favors of heaven in greater abundance. The remembrance of thee accompanies me everywhere ; the desire of hastening thy happiness urges me on, and unceasingly stimulates my zeal. I feel thee present, as it were, like a guardian angel, who at one time encourages me to prayer and good works, at another assures me of his prayers and assistance. Death has only brought our souls nearer to each other. Formerly I surrounded thee with my attentions, and was in turn the object of thy tenderest solicitude ; now I still love, and still am loved, and more than ever is my love capable of helping thee, and is itself repaid by thee."

What purity is there not in this love ! What holiness in the works which it imposes ! What a charm in the consolations it procures ! What a mysterious and holy association is that which unites in a community of mutual aid the visible and the invisible life, time and eternity : the just man who is still engaged in the combat, with him who is having his wounds healed in an exile that must soon end, and him who is already enjoying the glory and the triumph of heaven !

13. How does God reward the charitable ?

He rewards them for their charity, as if bestowed upon himself.

Who do you think it is that asks alms of you ? It is Jesus, your God, your Creator, your Lord, your Redeemer, your Father. He it is who, in the disguise of

poverty, implores your assistance. "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt., xxv., 40.) How happy and honored are those who give alms to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor! If you, like a father, shall give protection and support to the fatherless, and be as a husband to their mother, God also, to reward your charity, will show himself to you as a father, and will take care of you as his child; nay, he will be more kind, and more indulgent to you, than a mother can be to her children. You will be, then, a son of the Most High, because you comply with his precept of charity to the poor and fatherless. Thus to become and to be a son of God, is something far greater than to be king, emperor, or master of the whole universe; nay, it is even more than to be an angel, an archangel, a cherub, a seraph; it is, as it were, to be a god on earth. For, as the son of a man is man himself, so, in like manner, a son of God is a god himself, as it were; especially so, if he imitates those divine attributes which are most peculiar to God, and in which God himself glories most; that is, in charity and in liberality.

St. Hilary, commenting on Psalm 51 writes thus: "Gold given in alms, changes us from being earthly into heavenly beings; and from being mortals, into immortal creatures." And St. Clement of Alexandria says: "A man who is charitable towards others, is the image of God." (I. Strom.) "There is nothing," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "that makes man so godlike as charity towards his neighbor. Be a god to the helpless and needy, by imitating the charity of God." "If there be nothing," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "in which God

glories more than in his goodness, to what else, then, does Christ exhort you when he says: 'blessed are the merciful,' than that you should become a god by imitating that divine attribute, which is most peculiar to God." (Lib. de Beatitud. Beati misericordes.) "No act of devotion and piety of the faithful," says St. Leo, "delights the heart of God more than that which is performed towards the poor; and wherever the Lord finds a man engaged in the service of the poor, and exercising charity, there he sees and recognizes his image and likeness." (Serm. 10 de Quadrag.)

"*And the Lord will have mercy on thee more than a mother.*" O the wonderful goodness of God! by which he vouchsafes to be to the charitable not only a father, but also a mother; nay, even more than a mother, according to what he himself declares by the Prophet Isaias: "Thus saith the Lord that made and formed thee, thy helper from the womb. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, who are carried by my bowels, are borne up by my womb, even to your old age I am the same, and to your gray hairs I will carry you. I have made you, and I will bear you, I will carry and I will save. Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she could forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands." It was this charity of God which induced many philosophers and theologians of old to call the Lord "*Patri-matrem et matripatrem*," a father and a mother, because he unites in himself, with the omnipotence of the Father, the indulgence and kindness of a mother.

Again: "*The Lord will have mercy on thee, more than a mother.*" O great truth! too little reflected upon, too

little understood! As a true parent is more careful to do good to that one of his children who endeavors best to imitate his example, so, in like manner, God is more careful to bestow His mercy upon those of His children who try to the best of their power to imitate the example of His charity. He blesses them temporally and spiritually, at every moment of their life and for all eternity. If they pray to him, he grants their prayers most willingly. The Lord says through the mouth of the Prophet Isaias: "Deal out thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. . . . Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow. . . . Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say 'Here I am.'" (Chapters lviii. & i.) Charity, then, towards our fellow-men, especially towards the poor, render our prayers most powerful with God. "And thy justice shall go before thee," says the Prophet Isaias. (Chap. lviii.) The prophet means to say that God will hear those prayers which are accompanied by the works of charity, but that those performed without charity are powerless with him. The angel of the Lord declared this to Tobias: "Prayer is good, with fasting and alms." (Tob. xii., 8.) For this reason Tobias said on his death-bed to his son: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee." (Chap. iv., 7.)

The Bishop St. Julian used to distribute among the poor and needy every thing he possessed. The Church says of him that, on account of his extraordinary charity

towards his fellow-men, he obtained, through his prayers, many wonderful favors from God. Once, when the people were suffering very much from temporal want, he commenced to pray to God with tears in his eyes. All on a sudden, several wagons loaded with corn arrived, and no sooner were they unloaded, than the men who brought them disappeared.

Father Hunolt, S. J., (11 Serm. on the Following of Christ.) relates that there was once a certain vicious young man who often sincerely wished to change his life, but who, on account of his deeply-rooted evil habits, believed his conversion utterly impossible. He thought that whatever he might do, would be of no avail to excite true sorrow and contrition in his heart. One day, as he was overwhelmed with melancholy, he left home in order to seek some relief in the society of his companions. On leaving the house, he met, at the door, a poor beggar. As soon as he saw him, he remembered the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done to Me." He then went and took a loaf of bread, and throwing himself on his knees before the beggar, he gave it to him, thus praying in his heart: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I adore thee in the person of this poor man; most gladly would I give thee my whole heart, but I cannot, because it is too hardened; for the present at least, take, I beseech thee, this loaf of bread, which I am still able to give; do with my heart whatever thou wilt." Oh, the wonderful power of prayer when accompanied by works of charity! No sooner had he prayed thus, than he felt in his heart so bitter a sorrow for all his sins, that he shed a torrent of tears. He made a good confession, and ever afterwards received many extraordinary graces.

Henephon, a wealthy and powerful nobleman of Constantinople and his wife Mary led virtuous holy lives. They had two sons, John and Arcadius, whom they sent to Phœnicia to study jurisprudence. At first, the voyage was prosperous, but soon a fierce storm arose. The sails were torn to shreds; the masts were broken into splinters; the ship was entirely at the mercy of the storm. The two brothers prayed and embraced each other; in the next moment they were parted by the violence of the waves and the vessel sank into the boiling sea! John, the elder brother, seized a plank, was driven about at the mercy of the winds and waves, till finally he was cast on the shore of Phœnicia. Full of gratitude for his escape and thoroughly convinced of the nothingness of all earthly possessions, he fell on his knees and vowed to consecrate himself to the service of God in some monastery. Going farther inland, his good angel led his steps to the gate of a monastery. He presented himself to the Abbot and begged to be admitted into his pious community. The Abbot hearing the story of his shipwreck, was touched by his modesty and innocence, embraced him tenderly and received him among his religious.

Meanwhile, Arcadius, the younger brother, was also cast ashore. He had not the heart to return to his parents with the sad tidings of the shipwreck, and filled with gratitude to God he resolved to make a pilgrimage to the holy places in Palestine. He afterwards entered without knowing it, the very monastery where his brother lived. Here the two brothers lived for years without recognizing each other, as all the religious of the monastery lived in perpetual silence and solitude. The Abbot alone knew

who they were. You may imagine the grief of the parents on learning no news of their sons! They sent messengers to Phœnicia, who enquired everywhere without finding the least tidings of the young men. Finally, on their way homeward, they met one of the servants who accompanied the two brothers. From him they learned the sad news of the shipwreck. Ah! who can describe the grief of the parents when they learned the sad fate of their beloved children? They cast themselves on the ground, and with heart-rending groans and tears they offered the great sacrifice of their children to God: "The Lord hath given," they exclaimed with heroic resignation "and the Lord hath taken away! Blessed be the name of God!" They passed the whole night in prayers and tears beseeching the Lord to make known to them if their children were yet living. Towards morning they fell into a gentle slumber and both dreamed, that they saw their sons in Jerusalem. They appeared standing before the throne of Jesus Christ and crowned with glory.

The good couple resolved, therefore, to set out for Jerusalem in the hope of hearing some news of their dear children. They took with them a large sum of money to distribute to the poor and soon reached Jerusalem. They first visited the holy places and then went from one monastery to another, giving alms and requesting the prayers of the good religious. One day when they came to a certain monastery, the Abbot enlightened by God, recognized them instantly and called them by name. "Have confidence," he said; "continue your work of mercy; and when you have distributed your alms, return to this convent, perhaps God will give you some tidings of your long lost children."

The good parents were greatly astonished, and consoled by this address, coming especially from a stranger. As soon as they had bestowed alms on all the monasteries they hastened back to the holy Abbot. The good man received them kindly, and begged them to take a slight repast. "I have two religious here," said he, "who have passed through a rigorous fast and I wish to give them a little recreation!" The Abbot then went to the young men and informed them that they were brothers. No words can express the joy of the young men in meeting each other again. It was indeed a foretaste of heaven! The Abbot then said: "Two noble pilgrims are to dine here to-day. I wish you to wait on them and edify them by your good conduct. I therefore strictly forbid you to gaze upon them or to express your feelings in any way whatever, until I give you permission to speak."

The feast was soon ready. The pious couple were seated at table. The two religious waited on them, but they were so changed by hardships and penances, that the parents did not recognize them. At last the pilgrims entreated the Abbot to give them the promised tidings of their long lost children. "Ah! how happy would we be," they exclaimed "if our children had the good fortune to be holy servants of God as are the good religious who have waited on us to-day! What an honor it would be to have such children!"

Thereupon the Abbot commanded Arcadius to relate the adventures of his life. Arcadius began. He told where he was born; how he and his brother had been sent to Phœnicia; how they were shipwrecked; how they were saved, and finally, how they both met in the same monastery. "What are the names of your

parents?" asked the aged couple eagerly. "My father's name is Henophon and my mother's name is Mary," answered Arcadius. At these words the parents were transported with joy. They fell weeping upon the necks of their children, those dear children, so long lost and at length so happily found again. So great was the gratitude of these good people to God that, on their return home, they sold all they had, gave the proceeds to the poor, and entered into separate monasteries, where they led a most holy and edifying life. The Church honors them as saints. (Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*.)

If you wish to multiply your temporal goods without much trouble, you have but to give alms; for it is written, "Give and it shall be given to you." Alms-deeds are like the seed sown by Isaac, which yielded a hundred-fold. Christ has said of those who leave every thing for His sake, and distribute their goods among the poor, that they will receive a hundred-fold. St. Augustine justly remarks (*Serm. 25 De verbis Domini, c. 3.*) that the field of the poor is very fertile, yielding fruit instantly to those that cultivate it. "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want: he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence." (*Prov. xxviii., 27.*)

As a proof of this truth, let us remember the pot of meal and the cruse of oil, from which Elias received nourishment. "The pot of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished." (*III. Kings, chap. xvii., 16.*) "He that has mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord: and he will repay them." (*Prov., xix., 17.*) "The Lord," says St. Leo, "gives security for the poor, and returns every thing with usury. If you, then, wish to carry on usury, do so with God." "To give alms," says St. John Chrysos-

tom (Hom. xxxiii.), "is of all arts the most lucrative;" for the Lord is more liberal than nature. Put into the earth one grain of wheat, and for it you will reap a hundred, perhaps three hundred grains. But God is much more inclined to return for one act of charity, a hundred, nay a thousand.

Again, one good work leads to a better one. Humble yourself before God, and you will feel inclined to humble yourself still more. Pray, and you will feel desirous to pray still more. So in like manner, give alms, and you will feel incited to give still more. Thus the words of the Wise Man will be fulfilled in your regard: "Some distribute their own goods, and grow richer. The soul which blesseth shall be made fat: and he that inebriateth, shall be inebriated also himself." (Prov., xi., 24.) "God has prescribed," says St. John Chrysostom, "to give alms not only to relieve the needy, but also that thereby the goods of the giver should be increased, so that the giver of alms should gain more than the receiver himself."

One day, the Bishop St. Germanus met on his journey a poor man who asked an alms of him. The holy bishop asked his deacon how much money he had still left to defray the expenses of the journey. The deacon replied that he had only three dollars. "Well, give them to this poor man," said the bishop. The deacon, however, did not obey, but gave only two dollars to the beggar. At night a rich man came and gave the bishop two hundred dollars. "See," said St. Germanus to the deacon, "had you given the three dollars to the poor man, as I told you, our Lord would have sent to us one hundred dollars more. Learn from this, never more to distrust the liberality of God." (Life by Ribadeneira.)

Indeed, alms-giving forces God always to come to the assistance of the giver. "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor," says the Holy Ghost, "and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil. Better than the shield of the mighty, and than the spear, it shall fight for thee against thy enemy." (Ecclus. xxix., 15.) And again: "God provideth for him that showeth favor: He remembereth him afterwards, and in the time of his fall he shall find a sure stay." (Chap., iii., 34.) Just as if it were said: In the time of adversity, the alms giver will stand firm under the protection of God. Holy Scripture says: "The alms of a man is as a signet with him, and shall preserve the grace of a man as the apple of the eye" (Ecclus., xvii., 18.); as if it were said: As a seal-ring is worn on the finger, and is always before the eyes of man, so in like manner alms are always before the eyes of God, and the alms bestowed upon a poor person are preserved by God as the apple of the eye, *i. e.*, as a thing most precious in his sight.

One night, St. Philip Neri carried bread to a bashful poor man. On his way thither he fell into a deep ditch. But the Lord preserved him from being hurt, and sent his angel to extricate him from his dangerous position. Those who are familiar with the lives of charitable souls will remember many instances of this kind.

The love of God, however, is not satisfied with bestowing temporal blessings upon the charitable; He also bestows upon them His spiritual gifts and graces, which surpass the temporal blessings as much as eternity surpasses time. Now, the first and most necessary spiritual gift that the Lord can bestow upon the soul of man, is to deliver it from sin and eternal death. But charity

towards the needy induces the Lord to free the soul from sin. Tobias says: "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." (Chap. iv., 11.) "By charity towards the poor we shall overcome and avoid all sin," says St. Leo. (Serm. 2., De ascens.) "Let all those, then, who wish that Jesus Christ should spare them, be merciful and charitable to the poor," says the same holy Pope. (Serm. 4., De collect.) "Redeem thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor," said the holy prophet Daniel to King Nabuchodonosor. (Chap., iv., 24.)

Why is it that alms destroy sin? (1) Because those who are merciful to others, obtain mercy, according to the words of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt., v., 7.) Alms, of course do not remit mortal sin *directly* (the remission of mortal sin being obtained only by confession), but *indirectly*, because they are a powerful prayer to obtain from God the grace of sincere sorrow and amendment of life. We read in the Acts of the Apostles (Chap., x., 4.) that at Cæsarea there lived a certain centurion, named Cornelius, a religious man, *giving much alms, and always praying to God*. As he was yet a heathen, the Lord sent him an angel to tell him that he should send for Peter, and be instructed by him in the true faith. What induced our Lord to bestow this great grace upon this man? It was the great charity which this centurion always exhibited to the poor, as the angel of the Lord himself declared: "Thy prayers, and thy alms," said he, "have ascended for a memorial in the sight of God."

St. Eustace, also, when still a heathen, was very charitable to the poor. Christ himself one day appeared to

him and persuaded him to become a christian. He and his whole family were converted, and died as martyrs.

2. Alms-giving is said to destroy sin, because the poor will offer up to God their prayers in behalf of their benefactors, and their prayers cannot remain unheard. "The Lord hears the sighs and prayers of the poor," says Holy Scripture. (Ps., x., 17.)

3. To give alms is an act of charity, but "charity covers a multitude of sins," says the Apostle St. James. (Chap., v., 20.)

4. This act of charity will always remit temporal punishment. On account of his great charity to the poor, the Emperor Zeno escaped temporal punishment. John Moschus, in his "Spiritual Meadow," tells us that this Emperor had outraged the daughter of a certain lady. This lady went to church every day, there to pray to God that he might avenge her, and punish the emperor for his wicked deed. Having prayed for this with tears in her eyes during several days in succession, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and said that the hands of God were prevented from punishing the emperor on account of his great charity towards the poor. (Chap. clxxv.) "Water," says Holy Scripture, "quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins." (Eccles. iii., 3.) "Yes," says St. Augustine (Lib. xxi., Civit. xxxvii.), "there are some who cannot be saved without alms, because they are so deeply immersed in sin and irregular desires as not to be able to free themselves from their evil habits by means of the ordinary graces of God; they need a more powerful grace, which will be granted only through the prayers of the poor and needy."

"Alms-giving is, then," says the same St. Augustine

(Hom. xxix., inter. 80.), "like a propitiatory sacrifice offered to God to appease him." St. Paul writes : " Do not forget to do good, and to impart : for by such sacrifices God's favor is obtained." (Heb. xiii., 16.) For this reason, St. Ambrose calls alms-giving a *second baptism*. (Serm. xxxii.) Should any one have committed sin after baptism, let him appease the Lord, and purify his soul by alms-giving. For Christ has said : "Give alms, and, behold, all things are clean unto you." (Luke xi., 41.) However, it must be remembered that, though alms make us find mercy with God, that is, mercy for past sins, yet alms are not a license to commit sin with impunity. " For," says St. Augustine, " he who thinks he can bribe, as it were, the divine justice by charity to the poor, shall be damned and experience the divine justice in spite of all his alms."

Lord Arpini and his wife made, in the year 1030, their last will in the following manner : " When we commenced to reflect that we were conceived and born in sin, and have from our infancy committed many faults every day, and that on the day of judgment we shall have to give a strict account of all our thoughts, words and actions, and that every one will receive from the Eternal Judge what he has deserved ; and again, when we reflected that sinners will be cast into fire everlasting for having neglected to atone for their sins here below, and that the elect of God will enter into everlasting bliss : then all on a sudden our hearts felt deeply touched by the mercy of God, and we were filled with great fear and trembling. - Whilst yet reflecting about what we should do, we felt inspired to go and ask the advice of holy priests and religious men on the manner of redeeming our innumerable sins, of escap-

ing hell, and making sure of heaven. We were told, that under our circumstances, we could do nothing better than to give alms, and to build, of our own means, a church and a monastery, in which monks might serve God in a holy manner, and chant his praises, according to the rule and constitutions of St. Benedict, and pray for us incessantly. With the greatest pleasure we received this advice, and went by it. We built a church in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we made it over to the venerable Father Dominic and his monks, that they might serve and praise God therein." (Baronius.)

Alms-giving, however, is not only a propitiatory sacrifice; it is also a sacrifice of praise. 1. Alms are given in honor and praise of God. 2. Because alms make the poor and needy praise God for having inspired the giver to relieve them in their necessities. 3. Because, when others see this charity, they, too, will praise God for it, and will feel induced to imitate it. 4. As the charitable man bestows alms for the love of God, he often receives great consolation even in this life, and, therefore, thanks and praises God for the grace of being able to give alms.

It is, then, a great act of mercy on the part of God to receive alms both as a sacrifice of praise and as a sacrifice of propitiation. But this mercy is particularly visible at the hour of death. The hour of death, what an hour of terror! The past, the present, the future, fill the dying man with horror; the world is receding from him; the judgment of God is before him; a strict account is to be given; the temptations of the devil are most fierce,—all this makes the remembrance of death most frightful. But holy David says: "Blessed is he that understandeth

concerning the needy and the poor. The Lord will deliver him in the *evil day*." (Ps. xl., 2.) Now this evil day is the day, the hour of death. But in this hour the almsgiver will experience particular confidence in God. "Alms shall be," says Holy Scripture, "a great confidence before the Most High God to all those that give it." (Job, iv., 12.) And again: "Alms delivereth from death, and maketh to find mercy." (Chap. xii., 9.) "The goods of this world," says St. Ambrose, "will not follow us from death. Only the works of charity will accompany the dying. They will preserve them from hell." Tobias says: "According to thy ability be merciful, for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity." (Tobias, iv., 8.) St. Cyprian says that Tabita was restored to life on account of her charity towards the poor. "This woman," says Holy Scripture, "was full of good words and almsdeeds which she did." (Acts ix., 36, 40.) "A death-bed is a good one," says St. Francis de Sales, "if it has charity for a mattress." (Spirit of Francis de Sales.) St. Vincent de Paul was wont to say, "that those who have been charitable in the course of their life towards the poor, generally have no fear of death at the end of their life; that he had witnessed this in many instances, and that for this reason he recommended to all those who were afraid of death to be charitable to the poor." It is related in his life, that a certain man, who was very charitable to the poor, was always very much afraid of death. But in the whole course of his last illness which prepared him for death, he was calm and cheerful; he died with a joyous smile on his lips.

"Yes," says St. Jerome, "I cannot remember ever having read that a Catholic who was given to works of

charity died a bad death. He has too many intercessors in heaven, and it is impossible that the prayers of many should not be heard." "Works of charity alone," remarks a certain author (*Ad Fratres in eremo apud St. Augustin.*), "lead man to God and God to man. I never saw a charitable person die a bad death."

This confidence is a fruit of their charity to the poor—for they know that whatever they have given to the poor, they have given to our Lord Himself, as our Divine Saviour has declared: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (*Matt. xxv., 40.*) For this reason, the Fathers of the Church say, that whatever is given in alms is put, as it were, into the Savings Bank of heaven by the hands of the poor. "Secure your riches," exclaims St. John Chrysostom (*VII. De Pœnitent.*), "they are fleeting. How can you secure them? By giving them in alms you will make them stay with you; but by keeping them, you will make them leave you. Keep grain locked up, and it will be eaten by worms and disappear; sow it, and it will yield a rich harvest and remain. Thus, in like manner, riches put under lock and key will disappear; but given in alms to the poor they will yield a hundred-fold." St. Cyprian says the same. These are his words (*Tract. de Opere et eleemos.*): "A capital deposited in the hands of Jesus Christ cannot be confiscated by any government, nor can it become the prey of dishonest lawyers. That inheritance is secure which is deposited with God." Sophronius tells us, that Evagrius the philosopher heard one day, in a sermon, that in the other world a hundred-fold would be returned for every thing given in alms. So he brought sixty pounds of gold to

Bishop Synesius, that he might distribute them among the poor. He received, for this money, the bishop's note stating he would receive a hundred-fold in heaven. He told his children to put this note in his hands after his death, and bury him with it. Three days after his death he appeared to the bishop, and begged him to go to his grave and take back his note, as he had already received a hundred-fold from Christ, according to promise. Next morning the bishop together with his clergy went to the grave of Evagrius, and took from his hands the note, which then read as follows: "Evagrius, the philosopher, to his bishop—I did not wish that you should remain ignorant of the fact, that for all the money which I gave you, I have been rewarded a hundred-fold. You owe me nothing more."

The alms, then, which the charitable man has given, will inspire him in the hour of death with great confidence in Jesus Christ, his Eternal Judge. Holy David says: "Acceptable to God is the man that showeth mercy, and lendeth. Glory and wealth shall be in his house: he shall order his words with judgment." "In these words, the royal Prophet gives us to understand," says St. John Chrysostom, "that a man rich in works of charity will not be afraid of his Eternal Judge. In vain shall his sins rise to accuse him, if the poor excuse him." He gave his alms to Jesus Christ Himself in the person of the poor. "*Opera tua sumus*—we are your works," they will cry out to him. "We are so many advocates before the tribunal of Christ to defend your cause." "We will gain for you the good graces of the Eternal Judge," says St. John Chrysostom; "we will prevail upon Him to pronounce sentence in your favor."

St. James the Apostle, too, confirms us in this truth when he says, "Mercy exalteth itself above judgment." (Chap. ii., 32.) He means to say that charity will gloriously prevail over divine justice; for on the Day of Judgment Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat," etc. (Matt., xxv., 34.)

St. Gregory relates that two martyrs appeared one day to a certain religious person. Upon receiving from her an alms, as usual, they said: "You visit us to day, but we shall come to visit you on the Day of Judgment to do for you all we can."

Cornelius a Lapide, S. J., tells us that he himself heard from truthful Englishmen, that Carthusian monks, who had died as martyrs under Henry VIII., King of England, appeared to a certain lady, and promised to assist her in her last hour, for having received from her charitable aid and relief when detained in prison. They really came in her hour of death to assist her, and appeared with her before the tribunal of Christ to defend her cause.

"Be not afraid of death and judgment," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "if your charity towards the poor and needy pleads for you. On that day, mercy is hoped for in vain by him who has not practised charity towards the needy. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into fire everlasting; for I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat.'" (Matt. xxv.)

"In truth," exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "the charitable soul will behold and find in Jesus Christ her heavenly Treasurer rather than her Judge; she will boldly approach him to receive with great interest all that

she has deposited with him through the hands of the poor ; she will arrive like a queen at the gates of heaven ; the gates of paradise will be flung open immediately, and no one will dare ask : “ Who are you, and whence have you come ? ” “ Your business on earth,” says the saint, “ is to negotiate for heaven. Give earthly things to the poor, and for them you will receive heaven ; give a trifle, and for it you will receive a kingdom ; give a little crumb, and you will receive every thing.”

St. Gregory (Dial. 1. 4, c. 5., 37.) relates that a holy shoemaker of Rome, named Deusdedit (God has given it) would not work on Saturdays, but distributed among the poor all he had gained in the course of the week. Another holy man saw in a vision how the angels were preparing a palace for this holy shoemaker ; but they worked at it only on Saturday.

How true, then, are the words of St. John Chrysostom : “ Whatever,” he says, “ is given in alms, receives golden wings, and with them flies up to heaven, where it causes unspeakable joy to the angels. If you are given to works of mercy, you have a moral certainty of being predestined to life everlasting. “ Put ye on,” says St. Paul, “ as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy.” (Coloss. iii : 12.) As soon, therefore, as you begin to practise the works of charity, you lay the cornerstone of your future sanctity and glory.

It is related in the life of St. Francis Xavier that he one day asked Peter Veglio to give him money enough for a young lady to get married, and escape thus a great danger to which she was exposed. Peter was just playing chess and jocosely said to the saint : “ How can you expect that I should give you my own money when I am

trying to win the money of my neighbor? Well, here is the key of my desk. Go and take as much as you want." The saint took three hundred crowns, and then said to his friend: "Peter, God has graciously accepted your charity. I promise you on his part, that you shall always be in comfortable circumstances, and die a happy death. When one day the wine tastes bitter in your mouth, then prepare for death, for this bitter taste of the wine is a warning of the approach of your last hour." This prophecy came true. One day as Peter was drinking wine, he felt a bitter taste in his mouth. He began immediately to prepare for death. Both his life and death were happy and edifying.

We may then exclaim with St. John Chrysostom: "Truly, to be merciful and charitable towards the poor, is a greater grace than to possess the gift of removing mountains, of curing the sick, and of raising the dead to life."

But some one may say: "I have to provide for my children; and, therefore, I cannot be so liberal as I would wish." To those who make this objection, St. John Chrysostom answers: "If you will give up all to your children, you put your wealth in an unreliable bank; but if you place your wealth into the hands of God, he will become the guardian of your children, and preserve it all for them. If you wish the inheritance of your children to be well insured, make God their debtor by placing your wealth in his hands, and give them the following note: 'God will return a hundred-fold for what is given to him in the person of the poor. His promise faileth not. With him carry on usury.'" Another one might say: "I could wish, indeed, to make myself worthy of the rich temporal and

spiritual blessings which the Lord is accustomed to bestow upon the charitable, but I am not well off myself; I lack the means of being liberal." Let him who makes this objection remember that a small gift is also very acceptable with God, provided it be made with love. "The poor, too," says St. Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. de S. Baptismo.), "can give valuable gifts to God; because God considers more the love of the giver than the gift itself." "Before God you will never appear with empty hands," says St. Gregory (Hom. 5 in Evang.), "if you appear with a heart replenished with a good will." On this account Gerson used to say: "God seeks *adverbs* rather than *verbs*; that is, he pays more attention to the manner in which you do something in his honor, than to the action itself." Our Lord Jesus Christ was more pleased with the poor widow's mite, than with the rich gifts of the wealthy.

"If it is not in your power to give even a little," says St. Alphonus, "then recommend your neighbor to God, by saying at least a Hail Mary for him." I remember a charitable woman, who, when she had nothing to give to the poor, made, in winter, a large fire for them, that they might be able to warm themselves. There are many charitable persons, who, not having any means of their own to assist the poor, or the priest, in building churches, hospitals, asylums, and school-houses, beg the means from others to assist them, and bear patiently, for the sake of Christ and the poor, the insults they receive on many occasions. "Be, therefore, merciful according to thy ability," said Tobias to his son; "if thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little" (Tob. 4; 8, 9.)—but with the

generous will to give more if you are able ; thus the liberality of your heart will prevail upon the liberality of God to give you more ; because the Lord will not suffer himself to be outdone in liberality. " If any one," said our Lord to St. Gertrude, " desires, for the love of me, to perform a good work, but, for the want of means, cannot accomplish it, I will so esteem the purity of his intention as to consider it as if it had really been carried into effect ; and even if he never commences what he wishes to undertake, he will not fail to obtain the same reward from me as if he had accomplished the work, and had never committed the least negligence in the matter." (Life and Revelat.)

O the great goodness of God, who receives the good will for the deed ! Who can, then, have a lawful excuse if he be deprived of the abundant blessings which the Lord has in store for the charitable, both in this world and in the next ?

Now the Lord attaches all these blessings to the charity which you show even *to the least* of his brethren on earth. By saying " to the least of these my brethren," he gives us to understand that there is another class of his brethren who are great in his sight, and whom he loves most tenderly. Now, if God bestows such great blessings upon those who are charitable *to the least of the brethren* of Jesus Christ, how much more abundantly will he not bestow his blessings upon those who are charitable to his great friends ! Those who show themselves very charitable to the friends of God, to the pastors of souls, to missionary and religious priests, and in general to all those who have consecrated themselves for ever to the service of God and their neighbor, shall be blessed in a

still more extraordinary manner. The Holy Ghost calls our particular attention to this great truth, when he says in Holy Scripture (Ecclus. xii., 1, 2.): "If thou do good, know to whom thou doest it, and there shall be much thanks for thy good deeds. Do good to the *just*, and thou shalt find great recompense; and if not of him, *assuredly of the Lord.*" To the just, especially to those of them who are eminently so, may be applied what the angel of the Lord said of John the Baptist, namely, that "he was great before God." (Luke, i., 15.) The reason of this is, because Jesus Christ lives in the just by his grace. "I live, now not I," says Saint Paul, "but Christ liveth in me." (Galat., ii., 20.) Hence, whatever is given to a just man is given to Christ Himself in a more special manner. To show this in reality, Christ has often appeared in the form and clothing of a poor man, and as such begged and received alms. This happened to John the Deacon, as is related in his life by St. Gregory. The same saint relates also (Hom. xxxix., in Evang.), that Jesus Christ, in the form of a leper, appeared to a certain monk named Martyrius, who carried him on his shoulders. The same happened to St. Christopher. Also to St. Martin, bishop of Tours: when he was still a soldier, and receiving instruction for admission into the Catholic Church, he gave one half of his mantle to a poor man. The following night, Jesus Christ appeared to him, wearing this mantle, and said to the angels who surrounded him: "Behold, this is Martin, who gave me this mantle."

Once St. Catharine of Sienna gave to a poor beggar the silver cross she wore, having nothing else about her to give. During the night, Christ appeared to her and said that on the Day of Judgment he would "show that

cross to the whole world in proof of her charity." "He that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man (that is, for the reason of being just), shall receive the reward of a just man; and he that receiveth you (*i. e.*, the apostles, or their followers, religious, etc.), receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet." (Matt., x., 41-42.) He who receives a prophet, says our Lord—that is, he who receives a true prophet, a true preacher of the Gospel—will receive the reward of a true preacher. The reason of this is, because by his charitable aid he contributes towards the spreading of the gospel, and therefore, as he thus shares in the labor and in the merits of the gospel, he must also share in the reward promised to the true ministers of God; and this reward is always in proportion to the charitable aid he gives in spreading the Gospel. "A willow tree," says St. Gregory, "bears no fruit, but, supporting as it does the vine together with its grapes, it makes these its own by sustaining what is not its own." (Hom. xx., in Evang.) In like manner, he who supports the just man makes his own those works of righteousness which are performed by the righteous man, thus doing through him what is righteous; and he who supports the true minister of the Gospel, the missionary priest, preaches and prophesies through him, hears confession through him, converts sinners through him, consoles the sick through him, encourages the desperate through him, confirms the just in their good resolutions through him; in a word, he sanctifies the world through him, and is, through him, the cause that the most precious Blood of Jesus Christ is not shed in vain; and

he gladdens, through him, the angels and saints in heaven, and especially the sacred hearts of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On this account, St. Ignatius, in his epistle to the Smyrnians, rightly concludes from the above-mentioned sentence of Christ on the last day, that he who honors a prisoner of Christ will receive the reward of the martyrs, because by honoring such a prisoner he encourages him to suffer martyrdom. For this reason, many Christians formerly merited the grace of martyrdom, because they encouraged, fed, served, and buried the martyrs. In like manner we lawfully infer from the aforesaid sentence of Christ, that those who receive and aid doctors, apostles of the Church, pastors of souls, missionary priests, and religious persons, will receive the reward of doctors, of apostles, of the pastors of souls, of missionaries and religious persons.

And here I must make a very important remark, to which I call your special attention, namely; that there are degrees in this well-doing. The more just a man is both for himself and others, the more souls he leads to justice, to holiness of life; the greater will be his reward, and consequently the greater also will be the reward of him who assists such a just man. "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan., xii., 3.) To whom can these words of Holy Scripture be applied more truly than to fervent pastors of souls and missionary priests? They devote their whole life to the salvation of souls. There is nothing more pleasing in the sight of God than laboring for the salvation of souls. "We cannot offer any sacrifice to God," says St. Gregory, "which is equal to that of the zeal for the salvation

of souls." "This zeal and labor for the salvation of men," says St. John Chrysostom, "is of so great a merit before God, that to give up all our goods to the poor, or to spend our whole life in the exercise of all sorts of austerities, cannot equal the merit of this labor. This merit of laboring in the vineyard of the Lord is something far greater than the gift of working miracles. To be employed in this blessed labor is even more pleasing to the Divine Majesty than to suffer martyrdom." It was, therefore, with truth that Saint Alphonsus wrote to his brothers in religion :

"My dearest Brothers in Jesus Christ:—The principal thing which I recommend to you, is the love of Jesus Christ. Too much are we bound to love Him. He has snatched us from the midst of the world, in order that, during the pilgrimage of this life, we might think of nothing but of pleasing Him, and of bringing those crowds of people to love Him, who every year, by means of our ministry, abandon sin, and put themselves into the grace of God. It is generally the case that when we begin a mission, the greater number of the people of the place are in enmity with God, and deprived of His love; but five or six days have scarcely elapsed, when behold, numbers, as if roused from a deep sleep, begin to listen to the exhortations, the instructions, and the sermons; and when they see that God offers them His mercy, they begin to weep over their sins, and conceive the desire of being reconciled to Him. The way of pardon is opened before them, and seeing it, they begin to abhor that manner of life which they had previously loved; a new light begins to shine upon them, and a peace hitherto unknown touches their hearts. Then they think of going

to confession, to remove from their souls those vices which kept them separated from God; and whereas before, a Mass of a quarter of an hour appeared to them too long, and five decades of the Rosary too tedious, and a sermon of half an hour unbearable, now, they gladly hear a second and a third Mass, and they are sorry when the sermon, which has lasted an hour and a half, or perhaps two hours, is over. And of whom does the Lord make use of, if not of us, to work such wondrous changes, and to bring the people to delight in those very things which before they despised? So that when the mission is over, we leave in the place two or three thousand persons to love God, who before were living in enmity with Him, and were not even thinking of recovering His grace." (Letters of St. Alphonsus, July 29, 1774.)

If, then, in the opinion of the Fathers of the Church and all the saints, there can be no greater honor and no greater merit than that of working for the salvation of souls, we must also say that there can be no work of corporal mercy more honorable and more meritorious than that of giving charitable aid to the pastors of souls, to missionary priests, and to persons consecrated to God. To such as give this aid may be applied the words of the Prophet: "They shall shine as stars for all eternity." "The charity which you bestow," says Aristotle (Lib. I., Ethic., c. ii.), "will be so much the more divine the more it tends to the common welfare." But what kind of charity is tending more to the common welfare, than that which is bestowed upon such apostolic laborers as spend their life exclusively in laboring for the salvation of souls? Now this charity is divine in a most eminent degree, and consequently it makes all those divine who bestow it. They shall, with-

out doubt, shine as the stars, nay even as the sun, throughout all eternity. "Then the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt xiii., 43.); and this glory and happiness of theirs in heaven will, as I have said, be in proportion to the zeal and fervor with which they have continued to furnish charitable aid to Jesus Christ, in the person of the ministers of the holy Catholic Church. "He that receiveth a prophet, shall have the reward of a prophet."

What a happiness to be able to give! "It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive!" (Acts xx., 35.) What a happiness to have opportunities to imitate the charity, mercy and liberality of your Heavenly Father. Every little charitable contribution will add to the beauty of your soul; it will render your prayers more powerful; it will multiply your temporal goods a hundred-fold; it will cancel your sins and temporal punishments due to them: every little alms will avert from you God's anger; the sacrifice of propitiation and praise of your charitable donations will cause great joy in heaven; it will be for you a subject of consolation in the hour of death; it will inspire you with great confidence in Jesus Christ, your Eternal Judge, and gloriously prevail upon Him to pronounce sentence in your favor; every little contribution will give you one more claim on heaven; it will be one more precious stone wherewith to adorn your palace in paradise; it will bring you nearer to the delightful company of the great Saints, the noble children of God in heaven; there, as reward for your charity, you will shine like the sun, exclaiming with all the saints in joyful accents: "Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honor, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever." (Apocal. vii., 12.)

14. What must the uncharitable expect ?

“Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.” (James ii., 13.)

Great, unutterably great indeed are the blessings that God heaps, in this world and in the next, upon the charitable. But great also are the chastisements that often fall upon the uncharitable even in this world. Whilst Father Beschter, S. J., was building a beautiful church at Lebanon, Pennsylvania, he went around collecting alms of all those who were willing to help along a good work. On his rounds he arrived at the residence of a rich Protestant farmer, and asked him for a small donation toward the erection of a church for the poor Catholics of the district. The farmer refused on the ground that he always paid himself for what he wanted, and never went to others for help. Father Beschter asked him whether he was in need of anyone. “No,” replied the farmer quite gruffly, “I never was.” When the priest asked a second time, an impatient “No, sir! get thee out,” was sufficient intimation that he had better leave. “All right,” said Father Beschter, without the least alteration in his manner or voice, and he left the premises.

In the course of the day, the farmer strolled to where his men were working in the field, and highly elated over his exploit, related to them how he had “fixed that Romish priest.” A week later, a heavy freshet, occasioned by sudden rain, completely destroyed his mill and flooded his fields, inflicting incalculable damage on the now crest-fallen bigot, who did not enjoy it half so well when the men recalled to his mind how he *fixed that Romish priest*, and hinted that, forsooth, he might be in need of another man’s help sooner than he expected. (Life of Father Nerinckx.)

✓ In October 1880, a good sister went to a wealthy farmer of the state of Illinois to ask an alms of him. The farmer refused to give it. Two days later, he found twenty-six head of his best cattle lying dead in the stable. He now understood that God had punished him for his want of charity. He entered into himself and repaired his fault by giving liberally to the poor.

Now, if God, in many instances, has inflicted great chastisements even in this world upon the uncharitable, the evils and chastisements which he will inflict upon them in the world to come, are far greater.

“Judgment without mercy,” says St. James, “to him that hath not done mercy.” We know from holy Scripture what this judgment is. “When the Son of Man shall come in his Majesty and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the seat of his Majesty; and all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them from one another, even as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his left hand: ‘Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink. I was a stranger and you took me not in: naked and you covered me not: sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also shall answer him saying: ‘Lord when did we see thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger or naked, or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then shall he answer them saying: ‘Amen, I say to you as long as ye did it not to one of these least, neither did ye do it to me.’ And these

shall go into everlasting punishment." (Matt. xxv., 31, 32, 33, 41, 46.)

"There was a certain rich man," says our Lord in the Gospel, "who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus who lay at his gate full of sores desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table and no one did give him. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died and he was buried in hell." (Luke, xvi., 19, 23.)

15. Who truly loves God and his neighbor ?

He who keeps the commandments ; for Christ says : " If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love." (John xv., 10.)

There are many persons, who have a false idea of the true love of God. There is one who is given up to fasting. He thinks that he is a great lover of God, because he fasts, and yet his heart is filled with rancor. He scruples to moisten his tongue with wine, or even with water, through sobriety ; yet he makes no difficulty to drink deep of his neighbor's blood, by detraction and calumny. Now, who will believe that such a person truly loves God, because he fasts. True love of God, then, does not consist in fasting and in performing similar bodily mortifications.

There is another. He imagines that he loves God, because he daily says many long prayers ; hears several masses, and receives often holy communion ; yet immediately after he speaks very angrily and arrogantly to his

domestics and neighbors. Now, who would believe that such a person really loves God, because he says long prayers? True love of God, then, does not consist in saying many prayers.

There is another. He thinks he truly loves God, because he cheerfully draws rich alms out of his purse to relieve the poor and the needy; yet he cannot draw meekness out of his heart to forgive his enemies. Now, no sensible man will believe that such a person truly loves God, because he gives many alms to the poor. True love of God, then, does not consist in giving alms.

In what, then, does true love of God consist? or who is it that truly loves God? True love of God is nothing else than a general inclination, promptitude and firmness of the will in doing that which one knows is commanded by God; in other words, he truly loves God, who does the will of God, as manifested to him by the commandments of God and of his Church. These commandments teach us our duties towards God and our neighbor. Therefore, he who keeps them faithfully, truly loves God and his neighbor. "Love," says St. Paul, "is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii., 10.) Our Lord himself tells us that the keeping of the law is the proof of true love for him. "If you love me," he says, "keep my commandments." (John xiv., 15.) "He who has my commandments and observes them, he it is who loves me." Indeed, how can any one make himself more agreeable to a person than by doing his will. Now, what is the law of God and of his Church but the expression of his will as to how our lives and actions are to be regulated. We are taught in the first pages of the catechism that the reason why God created us, is to know God, love him and serve him. How can we serve him

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but by submitting our will to his—that is, by observing those commandments which he has given us! As true love of God, then, is principally manifested by the keeping of the laws of God, it is necessary, above all, to give a precise explanation of what is meant by the Law of God, and by the terms of eternal law, moral law, natural law, and so on.

What Law is.

“Law,” says St. Thomas, “is a dictate or command of reason, which tends to the general good of all, and is enacted and promulgated by him who governs the community.”

1. *Law is a command of reason.* Reason alone has the faculty and privilege to understand what is right and wrong. It naturally loves what is right, and hates what is wrong. Hence it commands what is right, and forbids what is wrong. So that law is an ordinance of reason, and has its power and authority from reason.

2. *It tends to the general good of all.* The law, says St. Isidore, is established, not for the advantage or interest of individuals, but for the general utility of all. Hence the civil relations, or moral obligations, which the law establishes, must have, as their principal object the general good of the whole community—*temporal good*, if the law has to direct a temporal community, and *spiritual good*, if the law is for a spiritual community. Hence a law, serving only private interest to the prejudice of the public good, has not the real character of law; but still, that which regards individuals and private transactions, can tend to the public good, and consequently be a part and portion of the general law.

3. *Enacted by him who governs the community.* He only who has power to maintain public order and advance

the general good of the state or community, can establish the law. He only who proposes to himself a certain end or object, has the right of choosing the means to attain that object. In like manner, the state or community, in proposing to itself the happiness of all, has alone the right of enacting for all, the laws and regulations which it considers the best and the safest. If it wishes, it can intrust its power and authority to one of its members to represent it, and act in the name of all. Then this chief, or representative, possesses the legislative power which the entire community had before. He can then enact laws which become obligatory for all his subjects, but not for those who are under the legislative power and jurisdiction of others. The law, says St. Isidore, is the civil and political constitution of the people, according to which the chief men of the state, in concert and co-operation with the common people, have passed an ordinance or legislative act.

4. *Promulgated* by him who governs the community. No law is obligatory before its regular promulgation. So a law, to have its full power and efficacy, must be duly and regularly promulgated by the chief legislator, or in his name. But to become obligatory as a law, is it necessary that all the members of the community must have full knowledge of it? No; when the legislator employs sufficient means for its general promulgation, then all are supposed to know it, and bound to observe it. The word law implies a moral obligation which binds by covenant and enactments, and is the rule and measure of public and private acts. Every individual is a member of a community, and must, therefore, direct a portion of his efforts towards the general good. Now, as the law is the rule and mea-

sure of what he is morally bound to do for the public good, he is obliged to obey the law.

Effects of the law. The principal effect of the law is to make all classes of people good, loyal, faithful, and virtuous. The virtue and merit of one who lives in a subordinate state consists in perfect obedience to him who has a right to command him. Obedience puts all parts in strict harmony with the whole: justice and reason are conformable thereto. So the law, by inculcating the principle of voluntary obedience and submission, stimulates us to loyalty, fidelity, and acts of virtue, which are the characteristics of honest, peaceable people. The other effects of the law are to command acts which are conformable to reason; to prohibit those that are contrary to justice; to punish those that violate it; and to permit those that are tolerable.

ETERNAL, NATURAL, AND MORAL LAW, THE ORIGIN OF OF ALL LAWS.

There is a ship-builder. He intends to build a large vessel. Before building it, he has formed, in his mind, not only a correct idea of the whole structure, but also of every portion of it—of the materials and harmony necessary in the grand vessel. He now begins to build the vessel and finishes it according to the plan or idea which he has conceived of it in his mind. Thus the building of the vessel is owing to the knowledge which the ship builder had formed of it, and to his will in building it according to his knowledge or plan.

In like manner, God, before creating the world, had conceived, in his own mind, not only the idea of the work of creation in general, but also of each creature in par-

ticular. The moment came for creating the world; God willed it, and the world was created according to the idea he had conceived of it from all eternity. Thus the creation of the world and of each particular creature, is owing to the knowledge and will of God.

Now a wise man undertakes no work without having a certain object in view, and without employing all the means in his power to attain that object. In creating the world and every being thereof, God, the wisest of all rational creatures, proposed to himself a particular end or object. All things made by him were good, not only on account of their substance, but also on account of their end, and principally on account of their last end. As he created the substance of all things, so he, also, fixed for them their special end and traced out for them the road which they ought to follow to attain that end.

Now, as there existed, in the mind of God, from all eternity, the idea of the work of creation in general, and of each creature in particular, so also there existed in his mind, at the same time, the idea or plan according to which the world in general and each particular creature should be directed towards the end for which every thing was created; there existed, in his mind, the idea of the proper means, that is, of necessary practical, and immutable rules or laws to be observed by his creatures to reach their end.

When God willed the creation of the world, he willed, at the same time, that the world should be directed according to his idea, by the means, or laws he provided for each creature to reach its end. This divine idea concerning the direction of the world and the rules of that direction, and the divine will directing it according

to this idea, is called *Eternal Law*. It is called eternal, because God's ideas are all eternal. What relates to men is temporal, but what originates from God is eternal. In him there is nothing temporal, nothing that indicates alteration, vicissitude or succession; for he knows from all eternity, what he does at all times, and the designs, actions, and movements of his creatures. Hence, this eternal law, that directs and governs all things, visible and invisible, is the origin of all laws.

Eternal Law, says St. Thomas, is nothing else than that perfect idea in the mind of God according to which he directs all the actions and movements of his creatures towards their end. When we see a vessel in open sea running with all its sails unfurled before the wind and making directly for the port, we say there is a skilful pilot who holds the helm of that vessel according to the laws of navigation. Now as a pilot steers a large vessel across the ocean to a port of a foreign country, by means of the laws and rules of navigation, so in like manner does God direct and govern his creatures according to certain laws or rules which he has laid down for them to follow.

In order to govern the material world, and all irrational creatures God placed in nature certain powers and laws. All irrational creatures obey these laws of God's wisdom and power, and it is thus that he governs them and directs them toward their end. "God," says Holy Scripture, "with a certain law and compass, enclosed the depth; he compassed the sea with its bounds and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits." (Prov., viii., 27, 30.) Light and darkness separated according to his idea and will, and when he ordered this

separation he willed, at the same time, that night and day should continue their constant, regular succession to the end of time.

When God ordered the waters to gather together in their allotted place, he willed at the same time that they should stay there to the end of time. When he commanded the earth to be clad with verdure, and the trees to bring forth fruit, he willed at the same time that this should be so to the end of the world ; and every creature forthwith acted in obedience to this divine will or law.

God commanded the sea not to overflow its bounds, and it has ever since obeyed this law, keeping reverently within the limits marked out by the Creator.

God commanded the sun, the moon, and the stars to rise and set regularly and keep in their path, and they have since followed this law.

God commanded the earth to produce every variety of trees and plants, and every kind of fruit and grain, and behold, the earth has ever since done so. As to rational creatures—angels and men—God wishes to govern them by the law of his goodness and justice.

The law of God's goodness for men is, that they shall always glorify God by doing his holy will ; that all their homage and adoration are due to him alone, and are never to be given to any creature ; that they are to honor, reverence, and love those who gave them birth and brought them up ; that they are not to kill one another, nor live like brutes, nor rob one another, but that every one is to treat his fellow-men, as he wishes to be treated by them. To this law of divine goodness, God added for mankind the law of his justice ; that is, if any one refuses to obey this law of divine goodness, he shall be

subjected to the torments which God's justice has decreed for all rebellious creatures.

This law of his goodness and justice God impressed upon mankind from the very beginning. "See," says St. Paul, "the goodness and severity of God : towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity ; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness." (Rom. xi., 22.)

This law of God's goodness and justice is also called *Natural Law*—Law of Nature, because it is naturally impressed on the mind and heart of every rational being, and makes him know the difference between good and evil.

As man possesses the gift of reason, or, as it is some, times called, "the light of nature," no man is left in utter ignorance of God and of his will—of the Natural Law. "God has not left himself without testimony" (Acts xiv., 16.), even among the heathens, who, if they do not have full light and knowledge, may yet, as St. Paul told the Athenians, "feel after him, or find him." (Acts xvii., 27.) "For when the Gentiles," he says, "who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves ; who show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them." (Rom. ii., 14, 15.) This "*light of nature*" is a participation of the eternal law or wisdom of God. "The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us," says the Royal Prophet (Ps. iv.), thus indicating that the light of reason, which makes us distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, is nothing else than the impression of divine light on the soul of man.

As all men have this light of nature as a rule of right and wrong, no one can plead utter ignorance of right and wrong. Hence it is that we find, even in the heathen nations, the obligations of the natural law respected. This eternal, natural law of right and wrong is called *moral law*, because natural law, or sound reason, is the rule and standard of good morals: it is the rule to guide men in all their actions; it tells them what is good and bad, what they must do or avoid.

Are all virtuous acts enjoined by natural law? Every thing is inclined to act according to its natural properties; fire for instance, by its natural property, produces heat and light. As man is endowed with reason, it is natural for him to perform acts conformable to reason. Now it is in the performance of such acts that human virtue consists. Still nature does not extend her influence to all virtuous acts, considered distinctively and separately; for she alone does not inspire all the conclusions and considerations that result from the rational faculty.

Is natural law the same for all mankind? All men, without exception, know the light of nature, the first and general principles of right and wrong. But all do not know the necessary conclusions deduced from these principles. A geometrician in Paris comes to the same conclusion as another in London, or in any other part of the world, that, for instance, three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, etc. Practical reason draws similar conclusions, if we do not lose sight of general principles; but by deviating from these principles, reason varies with circumstances. For instance, if a sum of money was intrusted to you, reason commands you to give it back to the owner. But if you knew he wanted it for the

purpose of committing some bad action, as vengeance against his neighbor or country, then reason forbids you to give it to him for such a wicked deed. Still, some may think and act differently, and be, therefore, mistaken in losing sight of general principles, as others fall into error in overlooking the first principles. Natural law, therefore, is invariable for all, as long as they do not lose sight of the first principles of right and wrong.

Can natural law change? Natural law comprises the first principles of right and wrong. Now these principles are unchangeable. It is self-evident that that which is natural cannot but be. For instance, the law of nature obliges us to worship God, and love him. God, then, after having given us life and reason, never changes what is naturally necessary for his creature, namely, to adore and love his creator. Hence the natural law imperatively enjoins upon us the duties of gratitude and love towards God, from which nothing can exempt us. However, a particular case may occur, in which certain circumstances change—not a first principle, which is immutable. So Abraham, in wishing to sacrifice his son, became not guilty of murder, because he obeyed the Lord who is master of life and death. Neither were the Hebrews guilty of robbery in taking along with them the gold and silver vessels of the Egyptians, because God, the Master of all things, had given them the right to take these articles. They were, besides, but a trifling compensation in comparison to all that they had suffered from the enemies of God.

The written law.

The laws of nature, and all principles of justice and morality were almost effaced in the time which elapsed

between Adam and Moses. At the time of Abraham, all nations had fallen into idolatry. They were plunged into all sorts of vices. Almost all shut their eyes to the lights of reason. They were like one who is falling into an abyss. The deeper he falls the less day-light he sees. God permitted the wicked to fall into this state of universal ignorance and impiety, in order to humble their pride and arrogance. Always full of pride and perversity, they pretend that their private reason alone is sufficient for them, to know their duties and their natural powers to practise them. So, after that sad experience of their ignorance and impiety, God, in his mercy, came to their assistance by giving them the written law in the person of Moses, as a remedy for their blindness and obstinacy. The natural law is imperfect. Hence a divine law is absolutely necessary to direct us in the way of eternal beatitude. We cannot attain to a supernatural end by natural or human means. We need a divine law to direct our thoughts and actions towards that end. The judgment of men is inconstant and changeable. They need an infallible law to direct and rectify their judgment, in order to know with certainty what they must do and avoid, in order to obtain everlasting happiness. So Almighty God added to the natural law, a higher law, relating to a higher end, in the form of the Mosaic and evangelical law.

Some interpreters of the Scriptures say that God himself gave the Mosaic law and others maintain that God gave it through the ministry of angels. Still it is clear from several passages of Holy Writ that the ancient law was given by the ministry of the angels. "The Law," says St. Paul, "was given through the agency of an-

gels by the hand of a Mediator." (Gal. iii., 19.) And St. Stephen said to the Jews: "Ye have received the law by the ministry of angels." (Acts vii., 53.) St. Dionysius, the Areopagite, says that the angels are commissioned to bring all messages from heaven to earth, that is from God to man.

Why did God give his written law to the Jewish people rather than to any other nation? St. Paul answers this question when he writes to the Romans (chap. iii.1, 2): "What advantage, then, have the Jews, or what is the utility of circumcision? Very much in every way. First, indeed, because the words of God were committed to them." The Royal Prophet says also: "The Lord hath not done the same to every nation, nor hath he made his judgments manifest to them." (Ps. cxlviii.) Even Moses himself declared to all the Hebrew people: "Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not possession of this excellent land for thy justice, for thou art a very stiff-necked people: but that the Lord might accomplish the promise he made by oath to thy Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." St. Paul says (Gal. iii., 16.) that these promises were made to Abraham and to his seed, that is, to one of his descendants, who is Jesus Christ. It was, therefore, necessary that the Jews, to whom these divine promises were made, should remain faithful to the worship of the true God, whilst other nations worshipped idols, and thereby rendered themselves unworthy of these heavenly privileges; for it is not right to give holy things to dogs. All the divine privileges and favors were not granted to the Jews, nor even to the patriarchs and prophets for the sake of their own merits. They were all gratuitous gifts of special grace and munificence

on the part of the Lord. God makes no exceptions of individuals or nations as to their salvation; but he can, in his justice and mercy, gratuitously confer special gifts and graces on some in preference to others. As to this predilection of God for one in preference to another, never ask the reason of this says, St. Augustine, if you do not wish to fall into doubt and error.

PRECEPTS OF THE OLD LAW.

The Old Law contained *moral, ceremonial, judicial* and *juridical* precepts.

1. *Moral Precepts.*

The principal object of divine law is to render man holy. "Be ye holy, as I am holy," says the Lord. This holiness consists in perfect love of God and man. This charity is the accomplishment of the law. It is, then, by the practice of virtue that we become holy and resemble God. Hence it was necessary, that the Old Law should contain different moral precepts, regarding the virtues necessary for the perfect happiness of man. These moral precepts are all contained in the ten commandments. These commandments are a full explanation of the natural law. They are of a divine institution. They were communicated by the ministry of angels to Moses, who proclaimed them all to the Hebrew people; but he added other precepts, ordinances, and ceremonies for the punctual observance of the commandments.

The three first prescribe our duties towards God; that is, to worship him by faith, hope and charity; and the seven last prescribe our duties towards all our fellow-men.

Do the precepts of the Decalogue admit dispensation? A dispensation can be granted in certain cases, when the

observance of the law would be contrary to the will or desire of the chief legislator. But the object of every good legislator is the general good of the community, and to maintain order and justice among all his subjects. He, therefore, cannot act to the contrary. He can then grant dispensation only in such points as regard the ways and means of observing, but not in the principal object of the law. For instance, the governor of a populous city or province orders all the inhabitants of the district to unite in defense of the city when besieged by the enemy; but foreseeing that some of them would be less serviceable in battle than in a council of war, he can, in this case, exempt them from the obligation of the law. But such cases are not admissable in regard to the precepts of the Decalogue; for they contain the infallible will of the divine and eternal Legislator. Therefore, in all cases, and in all circumstances, the commandments of God admit no dispensation: "For he continueth faithful and cannot deny himself." (II. Tim., ii., 13.) But he would deny himself, if he destroyed the order of his justice. Now this is impossible, for justice is an attribute of his divine and eternal essence.

2. *Ceremonial precepts.*

We are bound to worship God not only internally by sentiments of faith, hope and charity, but we are also bound to worship him externally by manifesting, by outward acts, our inward love and adoration of the Lord. Now all that regards this external religious profession, is called ceremonies, and the precepts regulating it, are called ceremonial precepts. "And the Lord showed you his covenant which he commanded you to do, and the ten commandments he wrote on two tables of stone. And

he commanded me, at the same time, to teach you the ceremonies and judgments you have to observe in the land which you are to possess." (Deut. iv., 3. 4.)

These precepts of the Mosaic law, figurative of the new law, regulated the public worship of the Hebrews in honor and acknowledgment of God. This worship was of an inward and outward character. As of an inward character, it consisted in offering up the whole homage of man's heart and soul to God. "My heart and my flesh rejoiced in the living God" (Ps. lxxxiii.), and as of an outward character, it was in connection with the first, as the body is in connection with the soul. It is true worship that unites the soul to God. It varies according to the manner and nature of that union. In heaven it shall be but acts of thanksgiving and everlasting adoration. "Joy and gladness shall be found there with thanksgiving and the voice of praise." (Isaias li. 3.)

In this world, the rays of divine light shine before our eyes only by means of sensible images. Under the ancient law, the true vision of the heavenly kingdom was not only invisible to the soul, but even the sure way, which leads thereto, was not yet opened for it. Hence the worship of the ancient law represented only in a figurative form both the celestial country and the Messiah who was to open the infallible way thereto for all mankind.

These divine mysteries were not spiritually known to the Jewish people. They had only an implicit knowledge of them by means of these figurative ceremonies, which made them offer public homage to the true, living God. Hence St. Paul says: "The law hath only a shadow of the good things to come, but not the true image of these things." (Heb. x., 1.)

What were the ceremonies of the Old Law? Divine worship implies *sacrifices, holy things, certain observances, and sacraments.* These are the principal things to which all the ceremonies of the Mosaic law refer :

A. The *sacrifices* constituted the supreme worship of adoration, and prefigured the great sacrifice of Mount Calvary. Now why were there ceremonial precepts concerning the sacrifices? The worship of the Old Law had two principal objects: the one to manifest our duties to God; the other, to prefigure the Redeemer of the world; and by those sacrifices, this twofold object was realized. By the immolation of victims and the offering of the first fruits of the earth in honor of God, the Jews manifested their gratitude to him, and acknowledged his sovereign dominion over all things. Hence it was strictly forbidden by the law to offer up sacrifices to any one else than to God. "Whoever offers sacrifices to the other gods, except to the one only God, shall be slain." (Exod.) This prohibition was proclaimed to the Hebrew people when they adored the golden calf in the desert, whereby they showed their inclination to idolatry.

The law prescribed three kinds of sacrifices: 1. The *holocaust*, whereby the victim was all burnt, in order to manifest the sovereign, eternal dominion of God. 2. The *special sacrifice*, of which one part was consumed, and the other consecrated to the use and support of the priests. This kind of sacrifice indicated that the remission of sins comes from divine mercy by the ministry of God's representatives on earth. 3. The *propitiatory* sacrifice, or *pacificatory* victim. One part of the victim was consumed in honor of God; the second was given to the priests, and the third to those who offered it, to show that

mercy and salvation come from the Lord by the ministry of his priests, and the faithful co-operation of those who receive them.

Of the four-footed animals to be immolated, the law designated the ox, sheep, and goat; and of the birds, the dove or pigeon, and sparrows for the healing of leprosy. This kind of animals and birds was required chiefly to make a distinction between the sacrifices of the Jews and those of Pagan nations. Besides, these animals and birds were very numerous in the Promised Land, and easily procured to make frequent offerings to the Lord. All these sacrifices prefigured the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary, and were emblematic of the sublime virtues that were one day to shine with splendor and glory in the Universal Holocaust of the whole human race.

B. Holy things.

The sacred or holy things comprised the tabernacle, the vessels used in the sanctuary, etc. The reason and utility of the ceremonial precepts regarding holy things, are not less evident for public instruction and edification. The object of external worship is to inspire us with profound respect for our merciful and omnipotent God.

Man is by nature or habit such, that what is common and always before his eyes, makes less impression upon him. Hence kings and princes, to enhance their personal dignity and grandeur, are clad in costly robes, and live in vast, magnificent palaces. Was it not then fit and proper, that the Lord, to whom supreme honor is due, should have certain times allotted to his worship, and a tabernacle, holy vessels, priests; and as temple, the magnificent monument of Jerusalem?

What is more capable of exciting our adoration, respect, and admiration, than what we see and hear in the temple of the Lord of mercy and glory ?

But it may be asked, why in the whole Land of Promise, there was but the only temple of Jerusalem ? The Jews had but one only temple to keep them from falling into idolatry, to confirm them in their belief in the one only Divinity, and to remind them of the truth, that, as they had but one Temple, so they had but one only God. This one only temple was also to foreshow the unity of the militant and triumphant Church of Jesus Christ.

Although the Jews had but one temple where the sacrifices were offered, yet they had their synagogues in all their towns and villages, to pray in private and to teach the law. So the Catholic churches, being all one in faith, serve separately for offering up the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and for the public instruction of the faithful. They thus have succeeded the temple and the synagogues of the Jews.

The Mosaic law prescribed seven principal festivals, the reason and origin of which are as follows. The first was perpetual, for a lamb was immolated every morning and evening to represent the duration of eternal happiness. The second was the festival of the Sabbath, which was celebrated every week, in memory of God's rest on the seventh day after the work of creation. The third was that of the Neomenia, or new moon, in opposition to that celebrated by the pagans at full moon. It was solemnized every month to remind the Jews of the benefits and protection of divine Providence.

The other festivals were celebrated but once a year. They were the solemnities of the Paschal Lamb, in memory

of the escape of the Jews from their captivity in Egypt ; and of the Pentecost during forty days, in commemoration of the law given to Moses. Three other festivals took place during the seventh month, the whole of which was employed in constant solemnity, corresponding to that of the Sabbath. The first day of that month was the festival of Trumpets, in memory of Abraham's sacrifice, who immolated, instead of his son Isaac, a ram with long horns, and hence is represented at this festival by trumpets. The sound of these instruments apprised the Jews to prepare themselves for the tenth day of the same month for the festival of Expiations, established in memory of the pardon that God granted them by the intercession of Moses for having adored the golden calf.

Then followed the festival of the Tents or Tabernacles, to commemorate the miraculous protection of the Hebrews in their journey through the desert, where they dwelt in tents. They had to offer, at this festival, the finest fruit of the trees, and branches of the finest verdure and of the most delicious odor. All this was found in abundance in the Promised Land, and was to signify that God had brought them from a barren land to a country of delightful fertility. The last festival was that of the Collection. During this day they had to contribute towards all that was necessary for the divine worship.

These religious solemnities had a mystic or figurative signification. The daily immolation of a lamb represented the perpetual sacrifice of the Lamb of God on our altars. The festival of the Sabbath represented the spiritual rest brought into the world by the Saviour of mankind. The festival of the new moon prefigured the light and grace of the Catholic Church by the doctrine and

miracles of the Son of God. The festival of Pentecost pre-announced the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and that of Trumpets their preaching the Gospel. The festival of the Expiation prefigured the purity of the Christian people, and the remission of their sins. The festival of the Tabernacles represented our pilgrimage and exile in this world of misery and desolation; and that of the Collection or assembly, the reunion of all the saints in heaven.

These three last festivals came in immediate succession, to denote that the Christian soul ought to advance incessantly from virtue to virtue, till it comes into possession of eternal happiness.

C. Particular Observances.

The Old Law contained particular observances, relating to the general manner of living, diet, dress, and many other national usages which distinguished the Jews from all heathen nations. The pontiffs and priests in the exercise of their respective functions wore peculiar robes to distinguish them from the rest of the laity. There was prescribed a strict abstinence from the flesh of impure animals. The use of flesh was ordered as most salutary for health and suitable to the climate. Idolaters used to eat the blood and grease of their victims. Hence the Mosaic law prohibited the use of them, and ordered to burn the grease, spill the blood at the foot of the altar, and cover it with ashes.

D. Sacraments of the Old Law.

The reception of those sacraments was but a kind of consecration to the worship of the true God.

Divine worship related both to the people and the ministers, priests or levites, and so the sacraments were

necessary for all. Three conditions were required for admission to fulfil and comply with the functions relative to worship.

Circumcision was requisite for all, and *Consecration* for the priests.

The law also enjoined upon the people the obligation of eating the paschal lamb, and on the priests that of the oblation of victims and the eating of the breads of Proposition.

In order to avoid every thing incompatible with the legal exercise of worship, the people had, besides, to undergo purifications and expiations; and the priests, the ablution of hands and feet, and the tonsure. Each of those religious ceremonies had a literal signification as to what related to God, and a figurative one in reference to the Messiah.

The sacraments of the Old Law prefigured those of the New Law. Thus the Paschal Lamb was figurative of the Eucharist; Circumcision was figurative of Baptism, Purification of Penance, and the Consecration of pontiffs and priests, of Holy Orders. The sacrament of confirmation, which is the fulness of grace and perfection for christians, had nothing corresponding to it in the Old Law; for, as St. Paul says, it brought nothing to perfection. Neither had Extreme Unction any thing in the Old Law to prefigure it; for this sacrament is an immediate preparation for eternal glory. But the redemption of mankind had to be wrought as yet by the precious Blood of the Son of God. As to marriage, it was only a simple contract or a kind of religious ceremony; but had not the real character of a sacrament; for the Mosaic law admitted divorce, which is contrary to the inviolable sanctity of the sacrament of matrimony.

The ceremonial precepts were introduced at the time of Moses. Their chief object was the worship of the true God, and the preparation of the Hebrew people for the coming of the Messiah, whose divine mission was represented by all those religious ceremonies. *Circumcision* began at the time of Abraham, and Melchisedec was then the high priest of the Sovereign Lord. So the Hebrew people had both Circumcision and priesthood before the time of Moses. Circumcision was a divine precept, sanctioned and always maintained by the law; but the priesthood, before the time of Moses, was but a human institution, and conferred on the oldest of each family.

All these precepts and ceremonies were abolished by the Saviour of the world. The New Law, being once promulgated, its worship succeeded that of the Old Law; the same as in heaven another worship shall succeed that of the New Law, which is an eternal adoration. "And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb." (Apoc. xxi., 22.)

During the life of Christ, the two laws existed together; for when the Saviour healed the leprous man, he ordered him to offer the sacrifice prescribed by the law. After our Saviour's Passion the Old Law was abolished. Reality put an end to figurative representation. The veil of the temple was torn off, and all was finally consummated.

After our Saviour's death it is strictly forbidden, under pain of mortal sin, to receive circumcision or to observe other ceremonies of the Old Law. "Behold, I tell you that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (Gal. v., 2.) A thing can be attested by acts as well as by

words. Now, to attest by the acts or ceremonies of the Mosaic law that the Messiah is still expected, is an evident outrage to his Divinity; it is to deny him and to destroy the divine fruits of his Passion. Hence the pious and holy words of the patriarchs and prophets concerning the future coming of the Messiah, would be blasphemies in the mouth of christians, if expressed according to the belief and doctrine of the Jews. However, it cannot be supposed that the Apostles, after having received the spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost, committed sin by observing, in certain points, the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. "Then Paul took the men, and the next day, being purified with them, entered into the temple giving notice of the days of purification, that an oblation should be offered for each of them." (Acts xvi., 26.) In regard to the observance of these Mosaic ceremonies and customs, the Apostles deliberated together, and unanimously passed a decree. (Acts xv., 28, 29.)

The Old Law existed at three distinct periods. It existed during the time preceding the Passion of our Saviour. During that time, all the precepts were in full force. It existed during the time which succeeded the general promulgation of the Gospel, and during the time between these two periods. It was during this time that the Apostles, through condescension to those of the Jews converted to the christian faith, allowed them the practice of certain ceremonies, but explained to them that they were not necessary for salvation, as faith in Jesus Christ was sufficient to obtain life eternal. But the Apostles never allowed to the christians converted from heathenism what they allowed to the converts from the Jewish religion. So St. Paul permitted the circumcision

of Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess, whilst he refused it to Titus, who was born of idolatrous parents. It was for the same reason that the Apostles enjoined on their neophytes to abstain from the use of certain meats, hoping thus to reconcile the converts from heathenism and the Jewish religion.

Justification could not be obtained by the observance of the ceremonial precepts of the Law. "Knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." (Gal. ii., 16.) There were two kinds of defilement: one of the body, and another of the soul. The one of the body was contracted by touching a leprous person, or a dead body. This defilement excluded the Jews from the right of public worship. Certain ceremonies were established to efface it. The effacing of this defilement is called by St. Paul the justice of the flesh. The defilement of the soul was that contracted by sin; but no ceremonies had the power or virtue to efface it. So, according to St. Paul, it was not possible that sins could be effaced by the blood of goats and oxen. These ceremonies, however, had a certain virtue in prefiguring the expected Messiah, for they excited faith and confidence in him, and nourished piety and devotion in the hearts of the Jews.

Why were there so many ceremonial precepts?

In every state or nation directed and governed by laws, there are two distinct classes of people; the one, inclined by natural and habitual propensity to evil; the other inclined to virtue, either by nature, habit, or the effect of divine grace. Now the great number of those precepts were good and salutary to correct and intimidate those who had a

strong habitual inclination to evil, for they were efficacious means to prevent the multitude from falling into idolatry, to which the Hebrews were constantly inclined.

As to those who were inclined to virtue, the law encouraged them to the practice of moral discipline and virtue, by reminding them incessantly of the presence of God, and of the coming of the great Messiah. So those ceremonial precepts were very necessary, as they gave the Jews a fore-knowledge of the immense spiritual and temporal benefits which the Redeemer would confer upon the world.

Did the precepts of the Old Law bind any other people than the Jews? The precepts of the natural law, contained in the Mosaic law, were binding on all nations and generations. But the other precepts and religious ceremonies were binding on the Jews alone, for God gave them to this people in consideration of the Messiah who was to come from them according to the flesh. Hence these precepts imposed upon the Jewish nation particular obligations, redounding to their glory, of which other nations were deprived.

These precepts may, in a certain manner, be compared to the vows which the priests and the religious orders of the Catholic Church make, and by which they contract special obligations before God; but from which all the laity are exempt, and still can work out their salvation without them. Thus the Gentiles could, by observing the natural law, and by supernatural grace, obtain salvation without observing the Mosaic law.

3. *Judicial and Juridical Precepts.*

The Old Law contained also *judicial* precepts. These precepts were to regulate and determine all obligations of justice between man and man.

The natural law gives us only general principles of justice and morality. It is, for instance, a natural law that we must worship God; but this law does not determine the mode and the time of worship. It is a natural law that malefactors should be punished; but this law does not determine the mode and kind of punishment. Hence it is necessary that the obligations of the natural law should be precisely determined by divine or human law. The Mosaic law supplied, by moral precepts, that insufficiency of the natural law; it specified, in a positive manner, the worship due to God, by ceremonial precepts, and regulated all the obligations of justice in civil and social relations. Hence St. Paul, when speaking of the Old Law, says: "The commandment is holy, just, and good"—holy in the ceremonial precepts, which relate to the divine worship, just in the judicial precepts, and good in the moral precepts.

Besides these precepts, the Mosaic law contained regulations about punishments to be inflicted, and rewards to be granted for the maintenance of these precepts. "If you willingly hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land; but if you will not, and provoke me to wrath, the sword shall devour you, for the Lord hath spoken so." (Isaiah i., 19.) The judicial precepts were not figurative like the ceremonial precepts. Still the different wars, triumphs, and defeats of the Jews had something figurative and quite different from those of other nations that were much more powerful, and are celebrated in history.

These precepts having been established to regulate the civil and social rights of the Jews, are now abolished, but can, without any violation of faith, be established by any christian sovereign in his dominion, provided, however, he

does not present them to his subjects as a divine institution originating from the Jewish law.

The reason and propriety of the judicial precepts.

In regard to the government of a state or empire, two things are to be considered ; namely, the legitimate power, and the constitutional form of its government. Every man in the state has a right to take part in the primitive formation of a government, and concur in the establishment of a competent legitimate power. This is the best means to maintain peace and order in the state, and animate all with the spirit of loyalty, and patriotism, and attachment to a political institution of their own creation.

A state or nation can adopt different forms of government. The principal are : *royalty*, when there is but one only sovereign ; *aristocracy*, when the grandees of the state govern ; and *democracy*, when the chiefs are chosen from all ranks, and elected by the people.

There are some who think that monarchy is the best system of government, because it is the most in harmony with the divine government ; but this system of government, they add, is too apt to fall into vice, luxury, avarice and cruelty, and these vices are generally the sources of oppression, tyranny, and slavery—mortal plagues of the human race. Hence Aristotole said : “ It is virtue and wisdom, alone, that can resist the temptations of power and fortune.” From this opinion, the enemies of the Catholic Church draw a false argument against the Catholics in this country. They say that the principles of the Catholic Church are opposed to the existence of the Republican form of government, because she favors monarchy, and, therefore, Catholics cannot conscientiously be true supporters of the Republic. This argument finds acceptance

with many people who are ignorant of the Catholic religion.

Our dear Saviour, the founder of the Catholic religion, of the New Law, which is a law of grace, has wisely regulated all our outward works and acts by moral precepts and the sacraments. As to external acts which are not contrary to faith and charity, the New Law of Christ gives us full liberty in such things. Hence the New Law is also called the law of liberty, not only because it delivers us from the bondage of sin and the devil, but also because it does not, like the Old Law, contain such a great number of precepts, which were an obstacle to the exercise of free-will. As to our internal acts, they are prescribed and contained in Christ's sermon on the Mount, which comprises all that is necessary for christian perfection.

But Christ has given us no positive precepts concerning the system of government which followers should embrace ; for grace does not depend on any particular form of government. Hence, one may be a good christian and faithful citizen under any form of government. Hence it is that the Catholic Church leaves to every state its own independence ; she ameliorates the political and social order, only by infusing into the hearts of the people and their rulers the principles of justice and love, and a sense of accountability to God. The action of the Church in political and social manners is indirect, not direct, and in strict accordance with the free-will of individuals and the autonomy of states. Servile fear does not rank very high among Catholic theologians. The Church, when she can, resorts to coercive measures only to repress disorders in the public body. Hence her rulers are called shepherds, not lords, and shepherds of their Master's flock, not of their own, and are to feed, tend, and protect the flock, and take

care of its increase for him, with sole reference to his will, and his honor and glory. The Catholic Church proffers to all every assistance necessary for the attainment of the most heroic sanctity, but she forces no man to accept that assistance. Catholics believe the doctrines of the Church, because they believe the Catholic Church to be the Church of God. They believe that Jesus Christ commissioned St. Peter and the Apostles, and their lawful successors, to teach all men in his name; to teach them infallibly and authoritatively his divine doctrine. They believe that this Church is the medium through which God manifests his will, and dispenses his grace to man, and through which alone we can hope for heaven. They believe that nothing can be more reasonable than to believe God at his word, and that, above all, they must seek the kingdom of God and secure their eternal salvation.

Being governed by the Church, as freemen, in the spirit of a republican government, and enjoying, as they do, the freedom of the children of God, Catholics feel nowhere more at home than under a republican form of government. If a great pope could say in truth, that he was nowhere more pope than in America, every Catholic can, and does, also say in truth, "Nowhere can I be a better Christian than in the United States." Hence it is that Catholics are very generally attached to the republican institutions of the country—no class of our citizens more so—and would defend them at the sacrifice of their lives. Catholics far more readily adjust themselves to our institutions than non-Catholics, and, among Catholics, it must be observed that *they* succeed best who best understand and best practise their religion. They who are least truly American, and yield most to demagogues, are those who have very

little of Catholicity, except the accident of being born of Catholic parents, who had them baptized in infancy.

Practical Catholics are the best Republicans! If we consult history, we find that they were always foremost in establishing and maintaining the republican form of government. Who originated all the free principles which lie at the basis of our own noble Constitution? Who gave us trial by jury, *habeas corpus*, stationary courts, and the principle—for which we fought and conquered in our revolutionary struggle against Protestant England—that taxes are not to be levied without the free consent of those who pay them? All these cardinal elements of free government date back to the good old Catholic times, in the middle ages—some three hundred years before the dawn of the Reformation! Our Catholic forefathers gave them all to us.

Again, we are indebted to Catholics for all the republics which ever existed in Christian times, down to the year 1776: for those of Switzerland, Venice, Genoa, Andorra, San Marino, and a host of minor free commonwealths, which sprang up in the “dark ages.” Some of these republics still exist, proud monuments and unanswerable evidences of Catholic devotion to freedom. They are acknowledged by Protestants, no less than by Catholics. I subjoin the testimony of an able writer in the *New York Tribune*, believed to be Bayard Taylor. This distinguished traveler—a staunch Protestant—appeals to history, and speaks from personal observation. He writes:

“Truth compels us to add that the oldest republic now existing is that of San Marino, not only Catholic, but wholly surrounded by the especial dominion of the popes, who might have crushed it like an egg-shell at any time

these last thousand years—but they didn't. The only republic we ever traveled in, besides our own, is Switzerland, half of its cantons or states entirely Catholic, yet never, that we have heard of, unfaithful to the cause of freedom. We never heard the Catholics of Hungary accused of backwardness in the late glorious struggle of their country for freedom, though its leaders were Protestants, fighting against a leading Catholic power, avowedly in favor of religious as well as civil liberty. And chivalric, unhappy Poland, almost wholly Catholic, has made as gallant struggles for freedom as any other nation; while of the three despotisms that crushed her, but one was Catholic."

Let us bring the subject home to our own times and country. Who, I would ask, first reared in triumph the broad banner of universal freedom on this North American Continent? Who first proclaimed in this new world a truth too wide and expansive to enter into the head of, or to be comprehended by, a narrow-minded bigot—a truth that every man should be free to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience? Who *first* proclaimed, on this broad continent, the glorious principles of universal freedom? Read Bancroft, read Goodrich, read Frost, read every Protestant historian of our country, and you will see there inscribed, on the historic page, a *fact* which reflects immortal honor on our American Catholic ancestry—that Lord Baltimore and his Catholic colonists of Maryland were the *first* to proclaim universal liberty, civil and religious; the *first* to announce, as the basis of their legislation, the great and noble principle that no man's faith and conscience should be a bar to his holding any office, or enjoying any *civil privilege* of the community.

What American can forget the names of Rochambeau, De Grasse, De Kalb, Pulaski, La Fayette, Kosciusko? Without the aid of these noble Catholic heroes, and of the bravetroops whom they led on to victory, would we have succeeded at all in our great revolutionary contest? Men of the clearest heads, and of the greatest political forecast, living at that time, thought not; at least they deemed the result exceedingly doubtful.

And during the whole war of the Revolution, who ever heard of a Catholic coward, or of a Catholic traitor? When the Protestant General, Gates, fled from the battlefield of Camden with the Protestant militia of North Carolina and Virginia, who but Catholics stood firm at their posts, and fought and died with the brave old Catholic hero, De Kalb? the veteran who, when others ingloriously fled, seized his good sword, and cried out to the brave old Maryland and Pennsylvania lines, "Stand firm, for I am too old to fly!" Who ever heard of a Catholic Arnold? And who has not heard of the brave Irish and German soldiers who, at a somewhat later period, mainly composed the invincible army of the impetuous "Mad Anthony" Wayne, and constituted the great bulwark of our defence against the savage invasions which threatened our whole northwestern frontier with devastation and ruin?

All these facts, and many more of a similar kind which might be alleged, cannot have passed away, as yet, from the memory of our American citizens. Americans cannot have forgotten, as yet, that the man who periled most in signing the Declaration of Independence was a Roman Catholic, and that when Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, put his name to that instrument, Benjamin Franklin observed, "There goes a cool million in support of the cause!"

And when our energies were exhausted, and the stoutest heart entertained the most gloomy forebodings as to the final issue, Catholic France stepped gallantly forth to the rescue of our infant freedom, almost crushed by an overwhelming English tyranny ! Catholic Spain also subsequently lent us her aid against England. Many of our most sagacious statesmen have believed that, but for this timely aid, our Declaration of Independence could scarcely have been made good.

These facts, which are but a few of those which might be adduced, prove conclusively that Catholicity is still what she was in the middle ages—the steadfast friend and supporter of free institutions.

When the Jewish people, wished to have a king as other nations had, God was displeased with their desire, and manifested his disapproval thereof to Samuel in these words : “ They have not rejected thee but me, that I should not reign over them.” (I Kings, viii., 7.) Samuel endeavored to dissuade them from their determination, but could not succeed, and concluded, saying : “ You, then, wish to have a king, but you shall become his slaves.”

However, God prescribed means to secure his people from despotism. Before the election of a king, they shall await the judgment of the Lord, and never put a strange prince upon the throne, who might not be attached to them. The king must not have immense wealth, nor a great number of chariots, or horses, or wives : he shall fear and obey the Lord ; read and practise his law ; he shall never despise nor oppress his subjects, and always observe strict justice towards them. (Deut. xvii.)

The Lord took all these precautions in favor of his chosen people, for he knew that with most nations,

and also with the Hebrew people who were always inclined to avarice and idolatry, absolute monarchy would be the cause of numberless abuses, and would sooner or later degenerate into tyranny and slavery.

The Old Law regulated with wisdom all the temporal and judicial affairs of the Jews. A nation is a multitude of people united to one another by common rights and wants. The mutual relations existing between them, depend either upon the authority of the prince, or upon the will of private individuals. It is the sovereign's duty to take care that justice be impartially administered to all; that the good be rewarded and the wicked punished. As to private transactions in buying and selling, they regard individuals, and the Old Law wisely regulated these affairs. Hence it established tribunals at the gates of the city; prohibited judges to receive presents; and required two witnesses in evidence of right, or wrong. (Deut. xvi., 18.)

The Old Law also regulated the rights of property among the Jews. "I have given you possession of a land which you shall divide by lots." (Numb. xxxiii., 52.) It also prohibited the perpetual alienation of properties; for they were to return to the first owner after the lapse of fifty years, that is, the year of the jubilee. Finally, in order to avoid confusion and litigation with regard to the right of property, the nearest relatives were to inherit it, in the following manner: first, the son; the daughter, the father, the grandfather; and then the relatives with equal proportion. The women were not allowed to marry except men of their own tribes.

The law ordered to give hospitality to all strangers; but if they were inclined to fix their residence in the country only for a certain time, the right of citizenship

was not granted to them, in order to avoid the danger of treachery and idolatry.

The Egyptians, in whose part of the country of Egypt the Hebrews first dwelt, and all the descendants of Esau, brother to Jacob, were incorporated with the Jewish people after the third generation. The Ammonites and Moabites, who were in constant hostility with the Hebrews, were always refused the right of citizenship. As to the Amalekites, the mortal enemies of the Hebrews, the law declared war against them from generation to generation. The law never permitted unjust and unnecessary wars, and ordered to offer peace before coming to battle; but, if refused, to prosecute the war with all might and energy, and depend on the powerful protection of the God of Armies. In conquered countries, they were to treat the women and children with the utmost humanity, and never to destroy the corn fields and fruit-trees.

In fine, the law enjoined on the conqueror to abstain from animosity and cruelty, and to use the victory with moderation and clemency.

It also prescribed salutary regulations for masters and servants. On the Sabbath day, the servants were allowed to rest, as well as their masters; and, if they were Jewish slaves, they recovered their liberty the seventh year. They were allowed to take with them all they had when first they entered into their master's service, and he was obliged to supply them with all that was necessary for their journey. If he treated any of them with too much severity, he was obliged to grant him his liberty.

The parents were bound to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, and in the knowledge of the law, which was the principal part of their religion, and to take

special care of their moral education; but if children were guilty of disobedience to their parents, and would not listen to their admonitions, the parents had to take them before the ancients of the city, who sentenced them to be stoned to death.

As to the regulations for marriage, the Jews were obliged to marry only such women as were of their own respective tribes; but if any one of them falsely accused his wife, he was punished for it, and she was thereby entitled to obtain a bill of divorce; and the husband had the same right, if his wife had been criminal. And the Pharisees said to Christ: "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce? And Christ answered: Because Moses, by reason of the hardness of your heart, permitted you to put away your wives; but it was not so from the beginning." (Matt. xix., 7, 8.)

The New Law or The Law of Grace.

The whole human race was destined to live successively during three distinct periods. The first period was that of the Old Law; the second that of the New Law, and the third and last that of the kingdom of eternal glory. St. Paul says that the Old Law was abolished on account of its weakness, and unprofitableness, for it brought nothing to perfection; but it brought unto us a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God. (Heb. vii., 8.) He says again: "That the law and commandment are indeed holy, just and good." Now, we say that a doctrine is good when it is conformable to truth, and we say that a law is good when it is consistent with reason. Such was the Old Law; for it repressed concupiscence, which militates against reason, and it forbade all transgressions contrary to human reason and the divine law. It acted as a phy-

sician does, in restoring a patient to health by salutary prescriptions. The chief end of man is eternal glory ; but it is by divine grace alone that we can merit it. The Old Law could not confer it. "The Law was given by Moses ; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i., 17.) But the Old Law was good because it was a preparation for the law of grace, for the coming of the Messiah, either by giving testimony of him, or by preserving among the Jews the knowledge and worship of the true God. "Before the true faith came, we were kept under the law for that faith which was to be revealed." (Gal. iii., 23.)

However, notwithstanding the imperfection of the Old Law, the Jews had sufficient means of salvation by faith in the Redeemer to come. Jesus Christ, ardently expected, was the Saviour of the patriarchs, of the prophets, and of all the holy souls of the Old Testament ; as Jesus Christ truly come, is the Saviour of the apostles, martyrs, and all the holy souls of the New Testament.

The law of Christ, then, or the law of grace, was substituted for the Old Law. This law is called new for several reasons. It is *new* in its *author*. The Old Law was given by the ministry of angels, but the New Law, by the only-begotten Son of God. Hence, to prove the pre-eminence of the New Law above the Old Law, St. Paul says : "God had spoken in times past to our forefathers by the prophets, but has spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." (Heb. i., 1, 2.)

The law of Christ is *new* in its *efficacy*. The Old Law did not confer justification ; it only prefigured and promised it in view of the New Law, which supplied this insufficiency by substituting reality for figures, and the gift of grace for promises. Thus the law of Christ is the perfect accomplishment and realization of the Mosaic Law.

The law of Christ is *new* in its *rewards*. Moses, as we read in the beginning of the book of Exodus, conveyed the Hebrew people from Egypt, for the conquest of foreign nations, and promised them a land flowing with milk and honey.

The law of the Gospel proposes and promises, first of all, celestial and eternal happiness and glory. Jesus Christ began to preach the Gospel with these humble and holy words; "Do penance; the kingdom of heaven is approaching."

The law of Christ is *new* in the *perfection* it requires. The law ought to direct all human acts for the observance of justice and the punishment of all crimes. But the Mosaic law punished only external acts, whilst the law of the Gospel restrains even internal acts. The one repressed the actions of the hand, whilst the other represses even the sinful thoughts and passions of the heart.

The law of Christ is *new* in the *motive of its operation*. The Old Law operated only by fear and punishment, whilst the Law of Grace operates by perfect justice and charity. "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath delivered me from the law of sin and death," says St. Paul. (Rom. viii., 2.) In the Old Testament, says St. Augustine, the law was given in an external form to terrify the wicked, whilst in the New Testament, it is given by the infusion of divine charity for our justification. The Old Law of works was written on tables of stone, whilst the Law of Grace is engraved on the living tables of the hearts of the faithful. Hence the New Law is a law of grace, infused into the soul of the just, and proceeds from faith in Christ, who added counsels thereto for all who aspire to virtue and perfection.

By its divine authority, the New Law has power to prescribe outward works and prohibit certain others. As it has made us children of light, we must perform works of justice and charity, and avoid those of sin and darkness. "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord ; walk then as children of light." (Eph v., 8.) The new law is a law of grace and sanctity. But in order to know that we possess this divine gift of grace and sanctity, visible signs are necessary and the sacraments are such signs of grace. He who has received the gift of grace must manifest it in words and actions ; for the law of Christ orders us to profess our faith, and never to deny it on any occasion. (Matt. x., 32-33.)

The New Law, being a law of grace, charity and liberty, adds counsels to precepts, which are not absolutely obligatory. The precepts of the New Law are of a moral, indispensable obligation, whilst the counsels are of a discretionary character, and left to our own choice. "Ointment and perfumes rejoice the heart, and the good counsels of a friend are sweet to the soul." (Prov. xxvii., 9.) Now Christ being the essence of all wisdom and charity, his evangelical counsels are the most useful and salutary to all Christians.

Man is placed in this world between heavenly beatitude and temporal enjoyments ; so that the more he is attached to the one, the more he renounces the other. However, it is not necessary to deprive himself of all the goods of this world to attain eternal happiness ; but by depriving himself of the goods of this world, he places himself in a safer way to work out his salvation. The riches and enjoyments of this world seduce us by the attraction of three kinds of concupiscence. Hence, the

New Law, in order to bring us to evangelical perfection, proposes poverty as an infallible remedy to overcome the concupiscence of the eyes; chastity, to resist that of the flesh; and obedience, to conquer the pride and vanity of life. The counsels of the Gospel are thus a moral discipline, which leads to sanctity and perfection. Hence St. Paul, after having counselled virginity, adds: "And this I speak for your profit, not to cast a snare upon you, but for that which may give you power to attend upon the Lord without impediment."

How long is the New Law to last? As the law of grace is perfect in every manner, it cannot be succeeded by any other law. It will, therefore, last to the end of the world.

Would it not have been better, if the New Law had been given at the beginning of the world? As it is only the New Law that can confer grace on mankind, it would seem well if it had been given from the beginning, to remove the obstacle to grace, which was original sin. But we should remember that the New Law is a law of perfection. Now, according to the order of divine Providence things are brought to perfection by degrees, as a child grows to the age of maturity. The New Law was not given from the beginning, because after the fall, it was necessary that man should become sensible of the effects of his pride and malice. Hence God left him to his own free-will and the law of nature, and this being nearly effaced from his mind and heart, he gave him his written law. When these laws became insufficient for the enlightenment and moral direction of mankind, reason and sound philosophy proclaimed that the world could not be saved except by a divine mediator.

The order of Providence is justice and perfection in all things. To realize this, Providence gave first the law of nature, then the written law, and, finally, the law of grace. Had the law of grace been given from the beginning, what would have become of the Christian faith at the end of ages? "But when the Son of Man cometh, do you think he shall find faith on earth?" (Luke xviii., 8.) So our Saviour came and gave his law at the most favorable time for the redemption and perfection of mankind, and prepared them for his coming by a long expectation. Hence St. Augustine says: "Christ did not wish to appear to men and preach his doctrine among them, but at the time and place where he knew there would be people to believe in him." "In the midst of years, O Lord, thou shalt manifest thy great work." (Habac. iii., 2.)

Human Law.

The natural law, or the first and general principles of justice and morality, were engraven on mankind from the beginning. From these principles, sound practical reason draws certain precepts which thus become human law. According to natural law, he who violates the laws ought to be punished. From this principle is derived a human law which prescribes and determines the mode and manner of punishment, either by imprisonment, hard labor, or death.

Human law is indispensably necessary for the administration of justice and the maintenance of public order. Aristotle says that a virtuous man is the best of all animals; but if not directed by virtue, he is of all brute beasts the most wicked and ferocious. What, then, can restrain that ferocious animal, regardless of the eternal and natural law, except the fear of corporal punishment inflicted by human law.

Although it be true that the natural law is the original principle of the human law, yet the conclusions, or precepts, drawn from the natural law, are not applicable to all nations in the same form and manner; and hence arises a diversity of positive laws. From the principle, just established, it is evident that the chief object of the positive law is the general good of all. Hence it must be conformable to divine law, otherwise it is not a good and just law, and consequently cannot impose a moral obligation. On this account, no one is bound to obey a law which is opposed to divine law.

The right of nations may be considered to have its origin and foundation in the natural law; but the tacit consent of all nations has made a positive law of it, for all nations have reciprocal duties and rights to fulfil towards one another.

As the principal object of human laws is to procure the general good of all, they must be established for the public good, and not for the private interest of individuals. The laws, therefore, in order to accomplish this object, must direct all their power for the most general and ordinary occurrences, and not for particular cases; they must contain general prescriptions with regard to persons, times and places.

The execution of law must in all things, be possible and practicable. The law, therefore, must be conformable to the nature, condition, and faculties of the people, and to the general customs of the country.

The law, however, cannot give rules for all sort of virtues and vices. The acts of a virtuous man are not the same as those of a wicked, corrupt man; but the laws are for all men, the greater part of whom are not perfect in virtue. The laws, therefore, cannot possibly repress

all sorts of vices, but only those crimes which are prejudicial to public safety and the general welfare of society such as robbery, murder, etc.

Human laws, if just and conformable to reason and divine law, are binding in conscience; for the legislators of the people are the representatives of God, invested with a sacred and inviolable power. "By me Kings reign, and law-givers decree just things." (Prov. viii., 15.) Now, we are bound in conscience to respect divine authority, the source and foundation of all laws. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God. He, therefore, that resisteth the powers resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. Therefore be subject of necessity, not only for fear of punishment, but also for conscience sake." (Rom. xviii., 1, 2, 3.) Hence all are bound in conscience to obey the laws established for the welfare and protection of the community.

But should the legislator abuse his power by arbitrary and illegal means, it is evident that the authority of his laws is no longer binding, because it is not conformable to common justice and divine authority. However, if one could not disobey such laws without causing disturbance or public scandal, it would be better to submit with patience, according to what is said in the Gospel: "If a man contend with you in judgment, and take away your coat, let your cloak also with him." (Matt. v., 40.) But if any human law should be manifestly contrary to divine law, man ought never, on any consideration, give up his right in such a case: "for it is better to obey God than man." (Acts. iv.) Those only are bound to obey the law who are under the jurisdiction of their lawful sovereign.

The chief of the state can dispense one from the laws passed by subaltern authorities, as the Pope can from the laws or statutes of ecclesiastical discipline established by bishops in any part of christendom.

The legislator is bound to observe his own law, in virtue of the divine power and authority of which he is the minister. The divine and supreme Master of kings and nations severely blames all in higher power, who do not conform to their own laws and decrees. "Because what they say, they do not do it; they bind heavy and unsupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but with a finger of their own they will not move them." (Matt. xxiii., 3, 4.)

Although the chief of the state is not exempt from the law, yet, if absolute necessity or public utility requires it, he has power to change the law; but in any case, no one has a right to pronounce sentence of condemnation against him. In all cases it is necessary to conform to the spirit and letter of the law; but to conform to the spirit is better than to conform to the letter.

If, in any extraordinary case, there arises an unforeseen difficulty, it is necessary to appeal to the chief legislator, in order to obtain a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. But, if in any imminent, inevitable danger, one has not time to have recourse to the lawful authority, necessity grants him full dispensation. Hence the common maxim: "Necessity has no law."

Those laws which are given by the Sovereign Pontiffs and the bishops for the government of the Church are called Ecclesiastical Laws. It is a matter of faith that the Church can establish laws, which cannot be violated without sin. She received legislative power from Jesus

Christ, in these words: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven," and, "If he will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican." (Matt. xvii.)

The Church possesses also legislative power by virtue of the natural right. As she is a perfect and independent society, she has the right of self-government and that of prescribing what is necessary for its preservation or conducive to its end. By virtue of this power, the Church can establish laws, watch over their observance, and punish the transgressors, by excommunication and the refusal of the sacraments and Christian burial. The universal legislative power for the whole of christendom belongs to the Pope, and to the bishops in their respective dioceses, and to the councils of bishops for the entire Church, or for that part of the Church which they represent.

The object of the Ecclesiastical Law is: 1, to maintain order and peace throughout the body of the Church by a stable and prudent administration; 2, to prevent abuses; 3, to render the observance of the divine law and the practice of all that Jesus has taught and prescribed more easy to the faithful.

The laws of the Church are numerous: some regard hierarchial superiors; and others the clergy and religious orders; while others again, have reference to the sacraments, worship, and the benefits of worship; and lastly, some regard all the faithful. The principal of these last are called *the precepts of the Church*.

Conscience.

A certain traveller was obliged to pass through a vast forest in the darkness of the night. In order not to lose the way to his country, he carried a lamp in his hand, in

the light of which he could always clearly see the way he had to travel to reach his home in safety.

In this world, we all travel towards our true country which is heaven. We have to travel through the vast forest of this world, in the darkness of the night, that is we have to travel through the darkness of the temptations of the devil, of the flesh, and of wicked men.

Now in order that we may not lose our way to heaven God has given to every one a lamp in the light of which he can always see the way which he must go to enter the kingdom of heaven. This lamp is the law of God. "The commandment of God," says the Holy Scripture, "is a lamp, and his law is a light." (Prov. vi., 23.) The law of God is called a lamp, a light, because it shows to every one the way to heaven; it tells him what he must do and what he must avoid in order to please God and be saved. Keep my commandments and my law as the apple of thine eye, and thou shalt live." (Prov. viii., 2.)

The law of God, therefore, is one of the greatest gifts for every man. "I will give you," says the Lord, "a good gift," the gift of my commandments, "forsake not my law." (Prov. iv., 2.)

Now, God was not satisfied with showing to man the way to heaven—which is the keeping of his commandments—he, moreover, has given to every one an invisible companion, who stays with him day and night to the end of his life. Some give to this companion the name of conscience; others call him the oracle or voice of God in the nature and heart of man, as distinct from the voice of revelation. A certain poet says: "Whatever creed be taught, or land be trod, Man's conscience is the oracle of God." Yes, the voice of conscience comes of God, and not of man; it

was planted in us, before we had any training, though such training is necessary for its strength, growth, and due formation ; it is found even in the untutored savage.

When Columbus discovered America, the chieftain of an Indian tribe one day said to him : "I am told that thou hast lately come to these lands with a mighty force, and subdued many countries, spreading great fear among the people ; but be not, therefore, vain-glorious. Know that according to our belief, the souls of men have two journeys to perform after they have departed from the body : one to a place dismal and foul, and covered with darkness, prepared for those souls who have been unjust and cruel to their fellow-men ; the other, pleasant and full of light, for such as have promoted peace on earth. If, then, thou art mortal and dost expect to die, and dost believe that each one shall be rewarded according to his deeds, beware that thou wrongfully hurt no man, nor do harm to those who have done no harm to thee." (Irving's "Columbus," chapt.v., p. 433.)

From this short oration of a heathen, it is evident that there is a voice of conscience even in the savage, telling him what is right and what is wrong.

This faithful companion knows how far every one is acquainted with the law of God. He knows our desires, our words, our actions, and the omission of our duties. Now his office is to apply our knowledge of the law to every thing we desire, say, and do, in order to see whether our desires, words and actions are in conformity with the law of God, or in opposition to it. Hence St. Thomas says : "Conscience is not a power, but an act of the soul by which we apply, to a particular action, the first principles of right and wrong. If we apply these prin-

ciples to the commission or omission of an act, our conscience is witness of it. "For thy conscience knoweth that thou hast also often spoken evil of others." (Eccles. vii., 23.) If we apply those principles to what ought or ought not to be done for the moment, our conscience excites us to do it or dissuades us from doing it. If we apply those principles to a past transaction, to know whether it was good or bad, our conscience accuses or excuses us.

Conscience, then, is that faithful, inward monitor, that warns every man when he is about to offend God and leave the right road to heaven. Whenever we are on the point of desiring, saying, or doing something that is against God's law, conscience says to us on the part of God: "It is not lawful for thee." (Matt. xiv., 4.) No, thou art not allowed to perform that action, to speak that word, to entertain that desire, to read that book, to frequent that company, to go to that place of sin, to make that unlawful bargain.

If in spite of these remonstrances of conscience we still proceed, it rises up against us and cries out: "What hast thou done?" (Kings iii., 24.) Thou hast sinned; thou hast offended God, by transgressing his law, and going against his voice which warned thee not to do so; thou art guilty in his sight, and deserving to be punished according to the law of his justice. It was his conscience that made David say: "My sin is always before me." (Ps. lxxx., 5.) It was his conscience that made Judas cry out: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matt. xxvii., 4.)

Thus every sinner is accountable for his conduct, to his conscience, which, as Menander says, is his God. It is by means of conscience that God judges man. Conscience,

as the organ and instrument of God, pronounces, in his name, the sentence of condemnation; it passes, under his sovereign authority, the decree of his divine, justice. In this sense it is said that we ourselves are our first judges, and that the first tribunal to which we are cited is our own conscience, without being able to escape from its presence, or call in question its justice, or avoid its decree. Yes, this judgment is just, it is dreadful, it is without appeal. In pronouncing sentence, conscience is at the same time witness against us, and its deposition is so much the more dreadful as it is interior, clear, and personal to us.

Ah! how unfortunate is it to be condemned by ourselves, and to have nothing to oppose to the condemnation! And what, indeed, can be opposed when our own conscience is the accuser, witness and judge? Therefore, it only remains for conscience to assume the character of executioner, and to exercise its vengeance upon us. Dreadful charge! which is more terrible than all the rest. It punishes us. God intrusts the interest of his justice and revenge in the hands of conscience; and in how many ways does it not discharge this dreadful office against the sinner after his sin?—by those racking remorsees which tear him, as it were, to pieces; by the gnawing worm which eats him up; by the constant remembrance of his guilt, which follows him everywhere; by the fears, terrors, and continual alarms in which he lives. If he is visited by illness, if the least infirmity attacks him, death incessantly presents itself to his eyes. If thunders roar, if the earth quakes, if any unexpected accident happens, he believes that the hand of God is lifted up against him, fearing every instant to be swallowed up. Alas! can there be any more dreadful tor-

turer, any more cruel executioner, any more severe minister of vengeance for the sinner, than his own conscience! What more torturing for Cain than the bloody spectre of his brother Abel which presented itself continually to him? What more frightful for the impious Balthasar, than the sight of the hand which appeared on the wall and wrote the sentence of his condemnation upon it! What more horrifying for Antiochus than the picture of the temple of Jerusalem which he had profaned? What more alarming and terrifying for Henry VIII., King of England, than to behold, on his death bed, the legion of monks whom he had so cruelly treated!

And why were these men thus tortured? It was because conscience, whose rights they had trampled upon, sought atonement by setting the remembrance of their crimes continually before them.

“ Thus conscience pleads her cause within the breast:
Though long rebelled against, not yet suppressed.”

No wonder, that men sometimes commit suicide. They cannot bear the remorse of conscience, and so they try to find rest in death.

The hell of the wicked begins even in this world, and it continues throughout all eternity in the next. Hence St. Paul says: “ Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil.” (Rom. ii., 9.) “ By what things,” says Holy Scripture, “ a man sinneth, by the same he is also tormented.” (Wisd. xi., 17.) “ He who speaks (against his conscience) whatever he pleases, will hear in his heart what he does not like to hear,” says Comicus.

Now, such a remorse of conscience, though a punish-

ment, is at the same time a grace for the sinner. It warns him to enter into himself, by sincere repentance, to ask pardon of God, and promise amendment of life, and be saved. But if a sinner does not experience such a remorse he is, no doubt, in a most lamentable condition. The want of this grace forebodes a certain reprobation for all eternity. Now, this voice of conscience, which strikes terror into the souls of the wicked, fills the just with peace and happiness.

There is a great sinner : he is very sorry for all his sins. He firmly purposes amendment of life ; he makes a good confession. See him after confession. His countenance is radiant with beauty. His step has become again light. His soul reflects upon his features, the holy joy with which it is inebriated. He smiles upon those whom he meets, and every one sees that he is happy. He trembles now no longer when he lifts his eyes to heaven. He hopes, he loves. A supernatural strength animates him. He feels himself burning with zeal to do good. A new sun has risen upon his life, and every thing in him puts on the freshness of youth. And why ? Because his conscience has thrown off a load that bent him to the earth. It tells him that now he is once more the companion of angels ; that he has again entered that sweet alliance with God, whom he can now justly call his Father ; that he is reinstated in his dignity of a child of God. He is no longer afraid of God's justice, of death and of hell.

We must, then, always follow the voice or dictates of conscience, for "this is the keeping of the commandments," says Holy Scripture ; but "whatever is contrary to conscience, is sinful." (Rom. xiv., 23.)

“What rule,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “can a man follow, unless reason which is the imperative voice of conscience. He who does not appeal to his conscience on all occasions can have no rule of conduct. He is always in doubt and perplexity, wavering between vice and virtue, not knowing to which side to turn. He is like a vessel whose helm is lost in a violent storm.”

DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONSCIENCE.

Conscience, or the sense of right and wrong, which is the first element in religion, is so delicate, so fitful, so easily puzzled, obscured, perverted; so subtle in its argumentative methods, so impressible by education, so biassed by pride and passion, so unsteady in its flight, that this sense is at once the highest of all teachers, yet the least clear and luminous. Hence it is that we meet with different kinds of conscience.

1. *The right or true conscience.*

A right, or true conscience, is one which, according to sound principles, dictates what is right or wrong. For instance: a child knows that parents must not be obeyed if they command something that is sinful. Now, from this principle the child draws the conclusion that it is wrong for him to steal the sum of money which his father told him to steal.

2. *The erroneous or false conscience.*

A conscience is erroneous or false when it represents to us an action as good which is really bad. For instance: every one knows that a wilful lie is a sin. Now, there is one who sees his neighbor in danger of death, and knows that by telling a lie he can save the life of his neighbor. He feels certain that such a lie cannot be a sin, and that he would sin against charity if he were not to tell it.

A conscience is also erroneous when it represents what is really good as something really bad. For example : what can be better and holier than the Catholic religion ? And yet there may be found a non-Catholic who, from having been brought up in heresy, is fully persuaded from boyhood that we, Catholics, impugn and attack the word of God, that we are idolaters, pestilent deceivers, and, therefore, are to be shunned as pestilences. Now, such errors of conscience are either culpable or inculpable. They are culpable, if they spring from voluntary ignorance, and they are inculpable, if they spring from involuntary ignorance.

Ignorance is voluntary, or vincible, when one in doing something has certain doubts about the moral goodness or badness of his action, and about the obligation of examining whether his action is really good or bad, and nevertheless does not take the necessary means to find out whether what he is about to do is right or wrong. It is a law to profess the true religion in order to be saved. Now suppose, there is a non-Catholic. A sermon on the true religion, which he heard, or a book which he read, or a conversation which he had with a friend on this subject, or the conversion of a wealthy or learned man from Protestantism to the Catholic faith, or any other good reason whatever makes him doubt about the truth of his religion. If he does not make any inquiries about the true religion, as well as he is able, he remains in voluntary, culpable ignorance.

Ignorance is involuntary, or invincible, if one in doing something has not the least reasonable doubt about the goodness of the action. To illustrate : an heir enters upon an estate which formerly was acquired unjustly by his

ancestors ; but at the time when he took possession of it, he had not the least doubt about the just and lawful acquisition of the estate. In this he is in error, but the error is involuntary, and, therefore, not culpable. After some years, however, he discovers the flaw in his title, and still continues in the possession of the estate. From that time, his conscience becomes voluntarily, and criminally erroneous, contrary to good faith and the dictates of a good conscience.

“If your error is voluntary,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “and you do not do all you can to find out the truth, you are answerable for your conduct in following a false conscience. Such was the conscience of the persecutors of the Church of whom Jesus Christ says : “Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God.” (John xvi., 2.) When, in arguing about something, one of the premises is false, the conclusion must necessarily be false. In like manner all the acts of a conscience whose error is voluntary or vincible, are bad and partake in the evil result of voluntary ignorance. If you are wilfully ignorant of what you are bound in conscience to know, you are responsible for all your actions. Such is the conscience of many sinners, who wish to be ignorant of their duties in order to live without restraint. “They say to God,” says Job, “depart from us, we do not desire the knowledge of thy ways.” (Xxi., 14.) A conscience continuing thus to act in a known voluntary error, becomes quite criminal in the sight of God. This is the most lamentable and most unhappy state into which a soul can fall ; for this kind of conscience drives the sinner into all kinds of crimes, disorders, and excesses, and becomes to him the source of blindness of the unde:-

standing, of hardness of heart, and finally of eternal reprobation, if he preseveres in this state to the end of his life.

In order to avoid such great evils, we must rectify our conscience when it is vincibly erroneous—that is, when we are confused with doubts and suspicions about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of an action which we are about to perform, we must try, by examination, consultation, and employing the ordinary means, to find out whether we are right or wrong in what we are about to undertake.

But as long as a man's conscience is invincibly erroneous, he must follow it. "His will is then not in fault," says St. Thomas; "it can be good, and even produce meritorious acts, notwithstanding such error. No doubt, a person, who, from an invincibly erroneous conscience, believes that charity obliges him to tell a lie, if thereby he can save the life of his neighbor, performs a meritorious act, and he would sin against charity if he did not tell the lie. As long as a heretic judges his sect to be more or equally deserving of belief, he has no obligation to believe in the Catholic Church; and should he feel persuaded that we Catholics are pestilent deceivers, idolators, etc., he cannot while this persuasion lasts, with a safe conscience, hear us."

3. *The perplexed conscience.*

A man's conscience is said to be perplexed, when he is placed between two actions which appear bad. There is a person. She is bound to wait upon a sick neighbor on a Sunday: she thinks that it is a sin to leave that sick person, in order to go and hear Mass, and, at the same time, it appears to her that it is also a sin to stay away from Mass, in order to wait upon her sick friend. Now,

if the conscience of a person is thus perplexed, he must, as far as possible, take counsel of prudent men. If he cannot consult such, and is still under necessity of acting, he must choose what appears the lesser evil, and in so doing he will not commit sin.

4. *The certain conscience.*

A *certain* conscience is one which is clear and absolute in its dictates, so that, in obeying it, we feel morally certain that we are right. By moral certainty, is meant such a one as prudent and enlightened men think it reasonable to act upon in matters of importance. It is the highest kind of certainty we can ordinarily gain in matters of daily conduct.

5. *The timorous or tender conscience* is one which fears not only sin, but also whatever can have the least shadow, and smallest appearance of sin. Happy the conscience which is so disposed!

6. *The lax conscience.*

A *lax* conscience is one which, for a light reason, judges to be lawful what is very unlawful, or considers a sin which is grievous, only as a venial sin; in other words, a *lax* conscience is one which without sufficient reason favors liberty, either in order to escape the law, or to diminish the gravity of guilt. A *lax* conscience is generally the consequence of the neglect of prayer, of lukewarmness of the soul, of too much care and anxiety about temporal things, of familiar intercourse with the wicked, of the habit of sinning which destroys horror of sin, of a soft, tepid life which enervates the heart and makes it quite worldly. Such a conscience is most dangerous, for it leads the soul to the broad road of hell.

The remedies for such a conscience are: frequent re-

course to prayer, spiritual exercises, pious reading and meditation, frequent confession, conversation with the pious, and avoiding the company of the wicked.

7. *The doubtful conscience.*

A doubtful conscience is one which is, as it were, hanging in a balance, and being in suspense, uncertain whether a thing is lawful or not, whether an action is forbidden or allowed. On both sides it sees plausible reasons, which make an impression, but amongst these reasons there is none that draws down the weight, and is sufficient to ground a determination. Thus wavering between these different and opposite reasons, it remains undetermined, and dares not make a decision for fear of being deceived, and of falling into sin. Now, it is never allowed to act with a doubtful conscience. When we do something, we must be morally sure that what we are doing is lawful. To do something, and have, at the same time, a reasonable doubt about the lawfulness of our action, is to commit sin, because we expose ourselves to the danger of sin. If we act in such a doubt about the lawfulness of our action, we show ourselves indifferent as to whether we break a law or not, and consequently make ourselves guilty of the sin to the danger of which we expose ourselves. Hence St. Paul says: "Anything that is not according to conscience, is a sin." (Rom. xiv., 13.)

We must, then, seek for light and instruction, if we can; or, if it is necessary to act without delay, and we have neither means nor time to consult and procure information to clear the doubt and settle our conscience, after begging God to enlighten us, we must consider and examine what seems most expedient in his sight under the present circumstances, then take our determination

and proceed; yet always reserving the intention of procuring information, and correcting the mistake afterwards if any thing was not according to law. This is no longer acting in doubt, as the prospect of doing what seems most expedient takes away the doubt: we may, it is true, be deceived, but we cannot sin.

Now, doubts may arise in our mind as to whether we have complied with a certain law that must be complied with. It is a law, for instance, to be validly baptized. Now, if there arises a reasonable doubt about the validity of a person's baptism, that person must be baptized again to make sure of the compliance with the law. It is a certain law that in order to be saved a man must profess the true faith, live up to it, and die in it. Now, if a non-Catholic for good reasons doubts the truth of his religion, he is not allowed to continue to live and die in this doubt. He must, to the best of his ability, inquire about the true religion, and after having found it, he is obliged to embrace it, in order to comply with the law of professing the true divine faith and worship.

It is a law that we must confess all our mortal sins which we do remember after a careful examination of conscience. Now, if after confession we have a reasonable doubt as to whether we have confessed a certain mortal sin, we are bound to confess that sin, in order to make sure of having complied with the law of confessing all our mortal sins. If we have borrowed money from our neighbor and afterwards have a reasonable doubt as to whether we have returned it, we are still bound to pay it. In the time of war, an officer or a soldier, who doubts as to whether the war is just, is bound to obey his general, because it is a certain law that no one, much less a

superior, is to be accused of unjust commands and actions as long as there are not quite evident reasons to prove the contrary. There is a law which says, "Thou shalt not kill." Should a hunter, then, see something stir in a brush-wood, but doubts whether it is a man or an animal, he is not allowed to fire before he is sure that it is not a man. Or should a physican when prescribing medicine reasonably doubt that the medicine might kill his patient, he is not allowed to prescribe such a medicine.

Whenever, then, a law exists for certain, and we doubt whether we have complied with it, we can remove the doubt only by doing what is commanded; and if the law forbids something, and we reasonably doubt that what we are about to do, might violate the law, we are bound not to perform such an action; for every certain law requires a positively certain obedience.

But there may also arise in our minds doubts about the real existence of a law, that is, about its promulgation or its obligation in a certain case. There is one: he doubts whether a certain war is just. This doubt (called a speculative doubt) brings on another, whether it is lawful to take part in such a war. This last doubt is called a practical doubt, because there is question about doing something that may be against a certain law. To act under such a practical doubt is, as we have said above, to become guilty of sin.

In order not to expose ourselves to the danger of committing sin, we must be morally certain that what we are doing is lawful. This certainty, however, need not be such as to exclude even every speculative doubt. For instance, one doubts whether the dish which is placed before him on a Friday, is not flesh-meat. So far this doubt is but a speculative doubt, suggesting the question as to whether

or not this particular case comes under the law of abstinence. But should he before whom the dish is placed, not wish to order another dish, the practical doubt arises whether it is lawful for him to eat a dish which may be forbidden by the law of abstinence. It is evident that this person, if he is conscientious, is not allowed to eat the dish before he is morally sure that the eating of it is not forbidden by the law of abstinence.

What, then, is he to do if he cannot find out whether the dish is real flesh-meat or not? whether the law of abstinence in this case is binding on him or not? Many such cases may occur, in which we entertain speculative doubts whether a law exists for such a case, or such a person, or under such a circumstance of time or place, and we may not be able to decide whether the law exists or not. But from the fact that such a speculative doubt continues, it does not follow that we can leave the matter alone and act as we please. Such conduct would, no doubt, expose us to the danger of violating a law that may really exist. To acquire moral certainty for the lawfulness of our action, we must see whether there are reasons which prove that a law really exists or does not exist in this or that case.

Now, in trying to find out such reasons, we may find some that may seem to prove the real existence of the law whilst others may seem to prove that the law does not exist. It may happen that the reasons *pro* and *con.* are equally or almost equally strong, and it may also happen that the reasons *pro* are considerably stronger than the reasons *con.*, or *vice versa*. Those reasons which are considerably stronger may increase in strength and weight (become so strong and weighty) so much as to make those

opposed to them, sink in weight and strength. Now the question arises, how weighty these reasons must be to induce us to judge with moral certainty that the law is uncertain, and consequently is not binding. If the reasons proving that the law does not exist, are as strong or nearly as strong as those which prove the existence of the law, then we have moral certainty, says St. Alphonsus, to believe that the law does not exist; but, if the reasons, proving the existence of the law, are considerably stronger than those proving the contrary, then we ought to believe that the law exists.

This teaching is undoubtedly quite reasonable. In business matters, every sensible man adheres to that one of two opinions which is best grounded. In scientific matters, those opinions which are but little grounded are also but little cared for.

From what has been said, it is easy to understand what rigorism and laxism is. It is rigorism to pronounce in favor of the existence of the law in spite of very weighty reasons proving the contrary. This doctrine was condemned by Alexander VIII. Those who teach such a doctrine are called *strict Tutorists*. It is still rigorism, though not quite so bad, to maintain that we must pronounce in favor of the existence of the law, even if the opinion that the law does not exist, is better grounded. Those adhering to this opinion, are called *less strict Tutorists*. Finally, it is still rigorism to maintain that the reasons proving that the law does not exist, must be considerably stronger than those proving the contrary, in order to pronounce in favor of liberty or the non-existence of the law. Those adhering to this opinion are called *Probabilionists*. But each of these three opinions must be rejected. No

sensible man adopts and goes by such opinions in his daily business transactions, and social intercourse. No man of learning rejects, in scientific questions, the best grounded opinions and arguments. Why should we not act in the same way in discussing and deciding moral cases? What more unreasonable than the contrary?

Laxism is to maintain that the law does not exist, even if the reasons to prove the contrary should be considerably stronger and much weightier. It is self-evident that such an opinion is very lax, as it favors liberty beyond what is reasonable. It is true, those adhering to this opinion say, that in theory they only teach that the law does not exist, when there is a solid reason for its non-existence. They forget, however, that a real solid reason is no longer such, when considerably more solid reasons are opposed to it. They only care for having a solid reason for the non-existence of the law, and leave alone the more solid reasons which prove its existence. It is clear that in discussing the question of the existence or non-existence of the law, the reasons *pro* and *con.* must be carefully weighed and compared, and if the reasons, proving the existence of the law, are considerably weightier than the reasons proving its non-existence, the latter are no longer solid reasons.

Such is the doctrine of St. Alphonsus. "Those," he says, "who defend and adhere to the contrary opinion are called laxists. Their lax opinion is to be rejected in practice. *Auctores elapsi sæculi quasi communiter tenuere opinionem: 'Ut quis possit licite sequi opinionem etiam minus probabilem pro libertate (stantem), licet opinio pro lege sit certe probabilior. Hanc sententiam nos dicimus esse laxam et licite amplecti non posse.'*" (In *Apologia*, 1769, et *Homo Apost.* de canac. n. 31.) In a letter, dated July 8,

1768, St. Alphonsus writes : “*Librorum censor D. Delegatum adiit ipsique retulit, se opus Meum Morale legis ejusque sententias sanas invenisse, et quod attinet systema circa probabilem, me non sequi systema Jesuitarum, sed ipsis adversari ; Jesuitæ enim admittunt minus probabilem, sed ego eam reprobo.*” And in another letter, dated May 25, 1767, St. Alphonsus writes : “*Formidarem confessiones excipiendi licentiam concedere alicui ex nostris, qui sequi vellet opinionem certo cognitam ut minus probabilem.*”

8. *The SCRUPULOUS conscience.*

What is a scruple ? “A scruple,” says St. Alphonsus, “is a vain fear of sinning, which arises from false, groundless reasons.” There is a person : for frivolous reasons he imagines that something is forbidden which is not forbidden, or that something is commanded which is not commanded. So he is disturbed, and runs into doubts without any just foundation and reasonable motives. He sinks into the state of a scrupulous conscience, which is a continual torment to the soul itself, but also often to those who direct it.

A scrupulous conscience, then, gives an undue prominence to certain points of little or no consequence, while it is not unfrequently lax and careless about things of greater importance. It is generally found in persons of a melancholy character, of weak judgment, and of great nervousness. A scrupulous conscience is a diseased conscience.

Scruples may arise from different causes. They come from God, or from the devil, or from ourselves. Scruples which come from God, are sent as a trial to which the soul must submit. “These scruples,” says St. Alphonsus,

“are useful in those who have begun to lead better lives. For a soul which has but for a short time renounced sin, stands in need of being repeatedly purified. Now scruples produce this effect. They cleanse the soul, and, at the same time, make her careful to avoid real sins, and they also render her humble. So that, distrusting her own opinion, she places herself in the hands of her spiritual Director to be guided as he pleases. St. Francis de Sales used to say that the fear which begets scruples in those who have lately gone from the confines of sin, is a certain presage of future purity of conscience. But, on the other hand, scruples are hurtful to those who seek perfection and have for a long time given themselves to God. In such persons, says St. Teresa, scruples produce extravagant impressions which lead the soul to such a state that she will not advance a single step towards perfection. “Try always to do everything well,” says St. Francis de Sales, “but guard against inquietudes; for there is no greater obstacle to advancement in perfection!”

Scruples which come from the devil, are temptations which must be distrusted. “With regard to those,” says St. Alphonsus, “who walk in the way of perfection, the devil ordinarily fills their minds with scruples and troubles, in order to make them lose their mind, render the way of perfection hateful, give up mental prayer, the frequentation of the sacraments, lose by degrees the aid and love of God, abandon themselves to a tepid life, and finally pass from scruples to real sins. How many scrupulous persons have not, in order to get rid of their scruples, given up the practice of virtue, abandoned themselves to despair, and voluntarily took their lives. Father Scaramelli relates that he himself knew two persons, one who on,

account of scruples, cut with a knife his breast in several places, and another who shot himself dead. I know a person, who, on account of similar anxieties of conscience, threw himself from a window, but was not killed, and at another time intended to cast himself into a well, but was prevented by another person from carrying out his fatal intention. We read of several scrupulous persons who have taken their own lives.

For those scruples which arise from ourselves—from a melancholy temperament—we must humble ourselves. In the opinion of St. Francis de Sales, scruples originate from a cunning self-esteem—cunning, because it is so subtle and crafty as to deceive even those who are troubled by them. “For,” said he, “those who suffer from this malady will not acquiesce in the judgment of those who are enlightened in the ways of God. They always insist that their opinion should prevail over that of others; whereas, if they acquiesced and submitted their judgment to discreet directors, they would at once be cured and enjoy peace. It stands to reason that a sick man should suffer who will not use the remedies which are offered to him and are calculated to heal him, if he took them. Who will pity the man who dies of hunger and thirst, having placed within his reach all that can satisfy the one and quench the other? Scrupulosity is indeed a malady of difficult cure, and, like jealousy, it gathers fuel from every object. God preserve you from this tedious disease which I look upon as the quartan fever, or the jaundice of the soul.”

The marks of a scrupulous conscience are the following :

1. To be always afraid of not having, at confession, true sorrow, or a sincere purpose of amendment.

2. To be afraid, on frivolous grounds, of sinning in every action ; of always consenting, for example, to rash judgments, or to every bad thought which presents itself to the mind.

3. To be in constant doubt, considering an action at one time to be lawful, and at another unlawful, and to be at the same time disturbed with great fears and perplexities.

4. Not to acquiesce in the decision of the confessor, but obstinately to hold to one's own opinion.

5. To spend ever so much time in the examination of conscience, even about the smallest imperfections.

6. To banish temptations by making ridiculous gestures, such as closing the eyes suddenly, shaking the head, muttering to one's self, "No, I will not ; begone, devil !"

7. To be always uneasy about the confessions they have made, and to wish to repeat them.

8. To insist always on confessing the same sin, or to look upon something as sinful which has been repeatedly declared by the confessor as not sinful.

9. To reflect continually about the circumstances which may or may not have accompanied an action, and anxiously to seek certainty in all things.

Whether a penitent is scrupulous or not, is not to be decided by the penitent, but by the confessor ; for all scrupulous persons say that their scruples are not scruples, but real doubts and sins. If they knew them to be scruples, they would disregard them. They are in the dark, and therefore they do not see the state of their conscience. The confessor, who is free from the darkness in which they are involved, understands the matter well. The more a scrupulous person decides for himself, and the more

he labors to tranquilize his conscience by his own opinion, the greater will be his confusion and agitation of mind.

Now the scruples of some persons are about the past, and of others, about the present actions. As to scruples about past actions, some are afraid of not having confessed their sins as they ought. Hence they always wish to make general confessions, hoping thus to remove their fears and troubles. But what is the result? Their perplexities are increased, because new apprehensions and scruples of having omitted, or of not having sufficiently explained, their sins, are continually excited. Hence the more general confessions they make, the more uneasy they become.

No doubt a general confession is most useful to those who have never made one. It greatly contributes to humble the soul by placing before her all the irregularities of her past life. It also contributes to increase her sorrow for her ingratitude towards God, and to make her adopt holy resolutions for the future. A general confession, also, gives the confessor a better knowledge of the state of conscience of the soul, of the virtues she needs, and of the passions and vices to which she is most inclined. Thus, the confessor is better able to prescribe proper remedies and give suitable advice. But for those who once made a general confession, it is not useful to repeat it. Should a doubt afterwards arise, a penitent, who cannot remember having purposely omitted a greivous sin in confession, is (generally speaking) not obliged to confess any past sin, unless he is certain that it is a greivous sin and that he never confessed it.

But you may say, if the sin be really a mortal sin, and if I have not confessed it, shall I be saved? Yes; you

will be saved, says St. Thomas, St. Alphonsus, and all theologians. They all teach, that if, after a careful examination of conscience, a sin has not been confessed through forgetfulness, it is indirectly forgiven with the others by the absolution of the priest. It is true that when the penitent remembers it, or has a good reason to doubt whether he ever confessed it, he is obliged to confess it. But if he prudently judge that the sin was told in one of his past confessions, he is not obliged to confess it again. I say, he is not obliged to confess it, and this is true for all. But a penitent that is tortured by scruples is, according to all good theologians of the Church, not obliged to confess a past sin, unless he can swear that it was certainly a mortal sin, and that he never confessed it. For such a repetition of past sins may do great harm to the penitent, and drive him to despair. When a penitent is greatly agitated and confused in trying to decide whether he can swear or not to the certainty of the sin, the confessor can, in this case, exempt him from confessing sins of his past life; for in a case of so much danger and harm to the penitent, the obligation of providing for the integrity of confession ceases, because, according to all divines, a less inconvenience excuses from the integrity of confession.

Scrupulous persons, therefore, should believe that a general confession is useful to others, but very injurious to themselves. Hence, good spiritual directors do not permit scrupulous persons to speak of past sins. The remedy for them is, not to explain, but to be silent and to obey.

As to ordinary confessions, it is not necessary for those who seek perfection and communicate often, to receive

absolution before every communion. It is enough to receive absolution once a week. In one of his letters St. Francis de Sales says, that persons who walk in the way of perfection, but happen to commit even a deliberate venial sin, ought not, on this account, abstain from holy communion, if they have not the opportunity of going to confession. According to the teaching of the Church, we can obtain the forgiveness of venial sins by making an act of love and contrition.

As to scruples about the present, many persons are afraid that they commit sin in every action. They resemble certain horses that become shy at seeing something lying on the road. They rear, go backwards, and will no longer obey the bridle of the rider. So, too, a scrupulous person becomes frightened, perplexed, and disturbed in mind, fearing, without reason, that there is a grievous sin in this or that action which in itself is lawful and praiseworthy, or that he has given consent to bad thoughts, etc.

Now, a scrupulous conscience is no rule by which a person is to be guided in his moral actions. For a rule of morals is a rule of prudence. But a scrupulous conscience is destitute of prudence, since it goes by most frivolous reasons which are despised by men of prudence. Hence it is not only lawful, but even necessary to despise such reasons and act contrary to them. Those, then, who are always afraid of committing sin, or giving consent to every bad thought that presents itself to their mind, should remember two things: First, to have bad thoughts and to experience the sting of the flesh, is one thing, and to give consent to them deliberately is another. We cannot help birds flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from making a nest on

them. In like manner, we cannot keep away all bad thoughts and temptations, but we can refuse the consent of our will to them. Some persons feel troubled because they think they gave occasion to these thoughts and temptations. They think, they ought to stay away from this or that person or place, to give up this or that occupation and employment, etc., which causes bad thoughts to arise in their mind. But let them remember that we are not bound to give up an occupation, a place, etc., when the end for which we are engaged in it is good, either for our spiritual or temporal advantage, or for that of our neighbor. Satan can cause such thoughts to arise in our mind, even amidst the most holy occupations. It would be great folly to give up, on account of such temptations what we have a right to do. Such temptations must be despised. If they are very harassing and continual, it is sufficient resistance, says St. Alphonsus, to pay attention to our will that it may not deliberately give consent to any thing of the kind.

There are some persons, who, when troubled with such thoughts, make foolish gestures or signs, with the head, eyes, etc ; mutter certain words like these : " No, I will not ; begone, Satan," etc. Now, when the devil notices such outward signs, he knows that his temptations make an unpleasant impression, harass the mind, contract the heart, and prevent that person from performing his duties in a proper manner. So he feels encouraged to leave him no rest. Let the devil and his temptations be despised ; let him not see that they make you afraid. If a bee sits down on your face, and you chase it, it will sting you. If you leave it alone, it will fly off without having hurt you in the least. In like manner, if scruples and fears, and

bad thoughts of every kind sit down on you, and you imprudently fight them, they will sting you, that is, hurt you by becoming worse and worse. Leave them alone, despise them, and by and by they will leave you alone.

Secondly, it should be remembered, that, in order to commit a mortal sin, the full advertence of the understanding as well as the full consent of the will are required. If either be wanting, the sin is not grievous. Should a timorous, and especially a scrupulous person, doubt as to the full consent of the will, he may rest assured that he has not sinned grievously, unless he can affirm with certainty that he gave consent to mortal sin.

It is also useful for certain very timid souls, who are always in doubt about having consented to bad thoughts, to remember that it is better sometimes not to accuse themselves of certain temptations, such as temptations to hatred, against faith, or purity; because, by examining as to whether they have given a deliberate consent, and how they shall explain their temptations, images of bad objects are excited still more vividly in the mind, and their agitation is increased by the fear of having given a new consent. Such souls should be told to accuse themselves of such thoughts in a general way, saying: "I accuse myself of all the negligences I have been guilty of in not banishing bad thoughts."

There are two privileges, then, given to the scrupulous soul, by the generality of divines—by St. Antonine, Navarre, Suarez, and many others. The first is, that by acting with a fear or scruple, she is not guilty of sin as long as she acts through obedience. And it is not necessary for her to form expressly at each act a practical judgment of the lawfulness of her actions, by reflecting that she is

acting according to obedience. To exempt her from all fault, it is enough for her to make a virtual judgment—that is, it is enough for her to act in virtue of a judgment already formed, that such fears ought to be disregarded. Nor can it be said that the soul then acts with a practical doubt about the unlawfulness of the action: it is one thing to act with a practical doubt, and another to act with a fear of its sinfulness. Gerson justly teaches, that to act with a doubt, which arises from a formed conscience, or after a person has examined the circumstances, and come to the conclusion that while the doubt remains he cannot act without sin, would be to act with a practical doubt, and would be sinful. But when the mind is perplexed, vacillating amid doubts, and not knowing what opinion to adopt, but, at the same time, resolved not to do any thing displeasing to God, such a doubt is not, according to Gerson, a practical doubt, but a vain fear and scruple which should be as much as possible rejected and despised. Behold his words: “A conscience is formed, when, after inquiry and deliberation, a person judges by a definitive sentence that an act is to be performed or omitted. And to act against such a conscience is a sin. A fear or scruple of conscience consists in a vacillation of the mind between doubts; the soul knows not whether she is bound to do or to omit the act, but would not wish to omit what she knows to be pleasing to the divine will; and such fear should be as much as possible rejected and despised.” (Tract de Consc. et Scrup.) Hence, when a soul has a firm purpose not to offend God, and acts according to obedience in overcoming scruples, she is not guilty of sin, though she acts with fear, and though she does not actually advert to the command of her director.

The second privilege of the scrupulous is, that after having acted they should believe that they have not given consent to any temptation, unless they are certain of having fully adverted and consented to the malice of the sin. Hence, when they are doubtful, their very doubt is a certain sign that they either had not full advertence or that they did not give a full consent. Hence, if the confessor tells them not to confess such doubts, they ought to obey, and should not think of leaving him if he persists in refusing to listen to the explanation of their doubts. I add, that the spiritual father who is indulgent in hearing the doubts of scrupulous souls, falls into a great error; for, by scrutinizing their consciences, they generally become disquieted, and are rendered more incapable of advancing in the way of God. What has just been said does not regard so much the direction of penitents, as of confessors in the guidance of souls. Penitents have only to submit their judgment to their spiritual father, and to obey him in all things. However, it may be useful to certain penitents to know what has been just said for the direction of confessors, that when their confessor tells them not to accuse themselves of certain sins, nor to speak of them unless they are certain of having committed a grievous fault; or when, after having heard them, he sends them to communion without absolution, they may not begin to contend with him, but may obey blindly, without even asking a reason for the command which he has imposed upon them.

But some may say: I wish to act with a certainty of not giving displeasure to God. I answer, that the greatest security which you (who have a troubled conscience) can have is to obey your director, and to conquer scruples in spite of the actual fear which molests you. And

you know that though you were at the point of death, you would be obliged to act in this manner in order to avoid the delusions of the devil. And here I repeat what I have already said that you ought to scruple not doing violence to yourself in order to conquer scruples by acting against them, in obedience to your spiritual father, even though you may not be persuaded that your scruples are vain fears. For if you omit an act on account of the scruple you shall not be able to make any further progress in the way of God, and (as has been said) you will expose yourself to the danger of losing your soul or your mind; and to expose yourself to such danger is a certain sin. Hence, the devil excites so many fears in scrupulous persons that they may either abandon themselves to a tepid life, or may become fools; or at least that they may not advance in perfection, and live always amid troubles and confusion, in which hell always gains something. St. Louis Gonzaga used to say, that in troubled water the devil always finds fish to catch.

We have said that a scrupulous conscience is a diseased conscience. How is a scrupulous person to be cured of this disease? All theologians and masters of the spiritual life unanimously say that the principal and only remedy for a scrupulous person is to obey blindly his confessor and to distrust entirely his own judgment. Assuredly, a blind person needs a faithful guide to conduct him in the way in which he has to walk. Now, a scrupulous person is like a blind person; for on account of his scruples he is in a state of darkness and confusion. On this account he must allow himself to be guided by his ordinary confessor and obey him blindly. For, as a general rule, a scrupulous penitent should speak of his

doubts only to his ordinary confessor, because, any other confessor, who is not acquainted with the state of his conscience, may ask a question or say a word which is not in accordance with the directions and sentiments of the ordinary confessor. Thus it easily happens that such a question or word of another confessor throws a scrupulous penitent into a state of confusion and perplexity, makes him lose his confidence in his ordinary confessor and places him forever, or at least for a long time, in a state of great disturbance and agitation of mind. The ordinary confessor is for the scrupulous penitent the guide given to him by God. To obey him is to obey Almighty God himself, who has said of his priests: "He who heareth you, heareth me." (Luke x., 16.) Hence the scrupulous penitent who is not obedient to his confessor, is also disobedient to Christ. "He who despiseth you" that is, the priest, "despiseth me," that is, Jesus Christ. On this account St. John of the Cross used to say that, not to submit to the judgment of the confessor is pride and want of faith. A scrupulous person who does not obey his spiritual director is lost.

"Holy writ," says St. Francis de Sales, "teaches us that disobedience is a crime equal to idolatry and witchcraft; but what are we to think of the disobedience of scrupulous people who idolize their opinions so as to be enslaved by them, and who remain, as it were, embedded in their own ideas, against every kind of remonstrance, and against all reasons by which it is shown to them that their fears have no foundation. They will always defend themselves by saying that we flatter them, that they are not understood, that they do not explain themselves clearly enough."

God demands no account of what we have done through obedience to our confessor, says St. Alphonsus. St. Philip Neri says the same. "Let those who desire to advance in the way of God, submit themselves to a learned confessor and obey him in God's stead. Let him who does so rest assured that he will not have to give an account to God for his actions. The confessor of St. Veronica Juliana, appeared to her after his death and said: "Be always very obedient to your spiritual Director; for the obedient are not judged after their death." The reason is because, as they always are submissive to the will of the confessor who holds the place of God, they always live up to the will of God. Now the will of God is infinitely holy. Therefore, he who follows the will of God cannot be blamed or judged for what he has done to please God. The sentence which Almighty God will pronounce upon him is: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. xxv, 23.)

"Obey, then, your confessor," says St. Alphonsus, "and fear not that in obeying him you may be led astray." This was the practice of the saints who often were troubled with perplexities and fears of conscience. But in all their troubles of conscience they found peace in obedience to their confessor.

St. Catherine of Bologna was afflicted with scruples. She was sometimes afraid to receive holy communion; but in spite of all her fears she obeyed her confessor and received holy communion.

When St. Paulinus wrote to St. Augustine for advice in his doubts of conscience, St. Augustine replied: "Com-

municate your doubts and troubles to a spiritual physician, and let me know what the Lord will say to you through him." St. Augustine held for certain that God makes his will known to us through our spiritual director, if we communicate our troubles of conscience to him.

St. Antonine relates that whilst a certain religious of the Order of St. Dominic was greatly suffering from scruples, a deceased religious appeared to him and gave him the following advice: "Consult with the wise and acquiesce in their advice." The same holy archbishop relates that a disciple of St. Bernard was so terribly tormented with scruples that he no longer could say Mass. In this disturbed state of mind he asked advice of his holy master. St. Bernard said to him, without giving any reason for his counsel: "Go and say Mass; I take it on my conscience." The monk obeyed and was thenceforward delivered from all his troubles of conscience.

But you will say: "Oh! had I St. Bernard for my confessor, I, too, would willingly obey him, and obey him blindly. But my confessor is not a St. Bernard." Now this is a useless assertion. Your confessor is not a St. Bernard; he is more for you than a St. Bernard for he holds God's place for you. "You greatly err," says the learned Gerson, "when you speak thus; for you have placed yourself in the hands of a man not precisely because he is a learned or holy man, but rather because he holds God's place for you. Obey him then not as man, but as God and you will never go astray." (Tract de præp. ad Miss.)

In the beginning of his conversion St. Ignatius of Loyola was so violently assailed by scruples and so terribly encompassed with darkness that he found no

peace. But as he had great faith in the words of our Lord, "He that heareth you, heareth me," he said with great confidence, "Lord show me the way in which I must walk; and though you give me a dog for my guide, I will faithfully follow him." Now, because the saint was faithful in obeying his director he was not only delivered from his scruples, but became also an excellent guide for others.

But you will say: "I am not scrupulous; my anxieties are not vain, but well-grounded fears." I answer, no fool believes that he is a fool. His folly consists in being a fool without knowing it. So you, too, are scrupulous without knowing it, and your scrupulosity consists precisely in this that you do not see the groundlessness of your scruples. Could you see that your scruples are all but vain fears you would pay no attention to them, and you would no longer be disturbed by them. Renounce your fears, and obey your confessor, who understands perfectly well the state of your conscience.

But you say: "The fault is not in my confessor, but in me, because I am not able to explain myself, and therefore he cannot understand the wretched condition of my soul." I answer; strange, very strange, indeed, that you, who have so many foolish scruples, do not scruple at all to charge your confessor with ignorance and even with impiety. You are like that religious who accused her confessor of heresy because he said that the faults which she confessed, were no real sins. Ah! tell me, in what university did you study theology that you know better than your confessor how to decide in matters of conscience? Go and mind your own business, which is to obey Christ in his priest, and to let your follies alone.

“But you say, if I am damned, in consequence of obeying my confessor, who will rescue me from hell?” What a folly to imagine that obedience can be the cause of damnation. All the damned have been sentenced to hell, not on account of their obedience, but on account of their disobedience to God and his lawful ministers. Ah! do not look upon God as a tyrant. Do not believe that God is provoked to wrath by every little fault you may commit. “My children,” said St. Teresa, “be assured that God does not, as you imagine, attend to so many trifles; do not suffer your heart to be contracted by such childish fears; if you do, you will be deprived of many blessings.” “Your excessive fears,” said our Lord to St. Margaret of Cortona, “are a great obstacle to my grace.” There is no safer way of escaping the snares and illusions of the devil than obedience to the confessor, and there is nothing more dangerous and hurtful than to follow one’s own private judgment and opinion.

But you say: “I must be in the state of damnation, for I have no faith, no confidence in God, no charity, no sorrow for my sins, no pleasure in any thing I do, not even in the holiest things—in hearing Mass, receiving holy communion,” etc. By this you mean to say that you do not feel your faith, hope, charity, etc. Now, as we cannot feel God, because he is a Spirit, so we cannot feel his grace because it is something spiritual—and the grace of faith, of hope, of charity, of sorrow, etc., must not be sought in our feeling, but in our will. God gives us the grace of faith of hope, etc., not that we should feel it, but that by means of it our will may be ready to believe and do what God has commanded. If you, then, are ready to believe and do all that God teaches you through his Church, you have

faith, hope, charity, and sorrow for sin enough to become a saint.

Say, then, your prayers, hear Mass, receive holy communion, etc., not that you may experience sensible devotion, but that God may increase the readiness of your will to comply with all your duties. Do not feel discouraged on account of experiencing disgust and reluctance in all you do. What pleasure can there be for any one who has to work hard in the heat of the sun, or in the bitter cold of winter ? An employer does not pay less to his workmen because they suffer, or feel bad whilst at work. And will God be less just, less generous than man, if we have experienced all kinds of aversions to every thing we did in compliance with his will ? To do the will of God, is one thing and to enjoy doing it, that is, to draw a sensible pleasure from doing it, is another. It is our duty to do the will of God ; but in order to please God, and gain merit for heaven, it is not necessary that we should enjoy doing his will. If we have done God's will on earth in spite of all temptations to the contrary, we shall in heaven enjoy having done it.

And should you experience to the end of your life nothing but irksomeness and reluctance in the service of God, be not discouraged on account of it ; be not afraid that you are less pleasing to God. Rest assured that, if you remain faithful to God, in spite of yourself, as it were, you have the grace of God in a high degree ; for this firmness of your will is all owing to God's grace. Abandon yourself blindly to his goodness and mercy, and then rest assured that, after having sought in this life, not the consolation of God, but the God of consolation, not your own will and pleasure, but the good pleasure of Jesus

Christ, no father ever rewarded his child so liberally as your heavenly Father will reward you in heaven.

We have said that conscience is the voice of God, and that, to act against it is to commit sin. But in our day, it has become fashionable with a large number of men to get rid of religion. A man, who wishes to gratify his evil desires, without shame, without remorse, says: "There is no God; there is no hell: there is no hereafter, there is only this present life, and all in it is good." He looks upon conscience as a creation of man. He calls its dictate an imagination. He says that the notion of guiltiness which that dictate enforces, is simply irrational.

When he advocates the rights of conscience, he, of course, in no sense, means the rights of the Creator, nor the duty to him, in thought and deed, of the creature; he means only the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and eating according to his judgment or his humor, without any thought of God at all. He does not even pretend to go by any moral rule, but he demands what he thinks is an American's prerogative, to be his own master in all things, and to profess what he pleases, asking no one's leave, and accounting any one unutterably impertinent, who dares to say a word against his going to perdition, if he like it, in his own way. With such a man the right of conscience means the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Law-giver and Judge, to be independent of unseen obligations; to be free to take up any or no religion, to take up this or that, and let it go again; to go or not to go to Church, to boast of being above all religions, and to be an impartial critic of each of them; in a word, conscience is with that man nothing else than the right of self-will. Such is the

idea which a very large number of men have of conscience, Their rule and measure of right and wrong is utility, or expedience, or the happiness of the greatest number, or state, convenience or fitness, order, a long-sighted selfishness, a desire to be consistent with one's self.

But all these false conceptions of conscience will be no excuse before God for not having known better. The idea that there is no law or rule over our thoughts, desire, words, and actions, and that, without sin or error, we may think, desire, say, and do what we please, especially in matters of religion, is a downright absurdity. Our intellect is formed for truth and cannot help thinking according to truth. The intellect is not a faculty or power, which is, in itself, free, as the will is. Wheresoever it sees the truth it cannot help embracing it. It is not free to accept or to reject it, except when ignorance puts the mind in such a state as to render it unable to see the truth. Whenever the mind sees the truth, it is forced to accept it. When the mind does not see the truth it is inactive—it does nothing. If, in this case, it asserts one proposition rather than another, such assertion is merely an act of the will, and not an act of the intellect. For instance, if I am asked whether the moon is inhabited, I can assert that it is, merely because I choose to do so. But I am not compelled to make this assertion by any evidence, for I do not *know*. But if I am asked, to how much two and two amount, I cannot choose my answer: I am forced to say "four." The intellect, then, is bound to acknowledge the truth when it sees the truth. But the will may deny it. The intellect of any man cannot help acknowledging the existence of God, and of the first principles of right and wrong. But a perverse will may deny these truths.

Of all things that are good for men, truth is, without doubt, the greatest good.

Truth is the good thing for the intellect. As the eye was made to receive light, and the ear to receive sounds, and the hand to do all kinds of work, so the intellect was made to see and embrace the truth, to unite itself with the truth, and to find its repose in truth alone.

Truth is the good thing for the heart. The heart is bound to love something. Now, when the intellect does not show it a true, honest object of love, the heart is sure to soil itself in a sordid love.

Truth is the good thing for society. If truth does not guide its steps, society must fall into misery, and setting itself against the divine laws of the universe, will speedily be brought to utter ruin.

Truth is the good thing for men. They cannot attain their ultimate end—they cannot reach eternal goodness, except by means of the truth. So necessary is truth for men that the Son of God came down from heaven to teach them the truth.

Truth, then, is above all good things; it is a greater good than wealth and honors; it is above life and death, above men and angels. God is the only fountain of truth; truth alone leads to him, as it comes from him who is Truth itself. If this be so, what right can there be for any one to obscure the truth, to rob men of the truth, to proclaim errors under every attractive form, to proclaim errors to every class of men? No, there is no such right. Reason and conscience condemn such impious license.

How impious, then, all those who deny or pervert religious and moral truths? who sneer at what is good, in the present, and in the future, for the intellect and will of

man ? How detestable are they who entangle men in the subtle webs of sophisms, and expel religion and morality from the hearts of men ? who instil doubts and disputes about social truth which is the only stable foundation on which nations and empires can tranquilly repose ? Most execrable men, those who assume the right to insult the Lord and to destroy man. When God gave to man a free will, he intended that man should freely choose what is good and reject what is evil, in order thus to gain merit—a privilege which is denied to beasts, for they blindly follow their instincts.

But who can be foolish enough to think that God, in giving man a free will, dispensed him from the observance of his laws ? God is infinite goodness, justice, wisdom, mercy and purity, and he impressed on man the notion of goodness, justice, mercy, purity, in order that, as he himself hates all wickedness, injustice, error, and impurity, so man also should do the same. Hence it is impossible that God can concede to man a license to commit acts utterly repugnant to the divine nature, and also repugnant to the nature of man, who is made in the likeness and image of God.

Our use of liberty, therefore, must be consistent with reason ; it must be based upon a hatred of all that is evil, unjust, unkind, false, or impure ; and upon a strong desire to attain to all that is good, and true, and perfect.

What, then, are the worst enemies of the liberty of man ? First, that ignorance and error which prevent him from distinguishing clearly that which is just and right from that which is evil and false. Secondly, his passions which keep him from embracing the good which he knows and sees, and induce him to desire that which he

knows to be bad. Thirdly, any powers or authorities external to man, which prevent him from doing that which he knows to be good and which he desires to do ; or force him to do that which he sees to be unlawful, and which he shrinks from doing.

17. Who gave the ten commandments ?

God gave them to the Jews, through Moses, on Mount Sinai, and Christ confirmed them in the New Law.

Three months after the Israelites had left Egypt, they quitted their encampment in Raphidim, and came to the wilderness of Mount Sinai. There they pitched their tents over against the mountain from whence the commandments were to be proclaimed.

Moses was here called to go up the mountain into the presence of God. And God said to him : " Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them : Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have carried you upon the wings of eagles, and have taken you to myself. If, therefore, you will hear my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my people ; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation."

Moses returned, called together all the elders of the people, and declared to them the words which the Lord had commanded him. The people all answered with one voice : " All the Lord has spoken, we will do." Upon that public profession of their willingness to obey the divine precepts, Moses gave them notice to prepare for the third day, when they should hear God himself speaking to them from the summit of Mount Sinai. And that they might be worthy to appear before the Lord,

Moses ordered them to sanctify themselves, and to wash their garments. Around the foot of the holy mountain he drew a boundary, which no man or beast was to pass under pain of instantaneous death.

Now when the third day began to dawn, a bright light spread over the earth. The sky was clear and serene. All on a sudden, a dark and gloomy change came on, a solemn scene unfolded itself to the spectators. Quick lightnings flashed from the sullen cloud that hung over the top of Sinai, and dreadful thunders rolled on every side of the holy mount. The Lord descended in fire upon the steep summit, and called Moses to him.

The whole mountain was forthwith involved in thick smoke and an incessant stream of flames arose as from a glowing furnace. The shrill and swelling clangors of a trumpet were also heard at the same time. The people trembled and lay close within their tents.

Moses went down to them and with difficulty prevailed upon them to move out and range themselves in order beyond the boundary that he had set round the foot of the mountain.

The Lord then spoke his commands, saying :

I. I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth ; thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.

II. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.

III. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labor, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.

IV. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.

V. Thou shalt not kill.

VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VII. Thou shalt not steal.

VIII. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

IX. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

X. Thou shalt not desire his house, nor his servant, nor his hand-maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.

The people, terrified at the voice of God, and at the flames, and the sound of trumpet, and the mount all in smoke, said to Moses: "Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us lest we die." And Moses said to the people: "Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that the dread of him might be in you, and you should not sin!"

In compliance with the request of the people, it pleased Almighty God to speak no more in person to them, but to deliver to them his future commands through the

ministry of Moses. Hence he called him up again to the mountain, where he gave him many new instructions, and having fully explained himself to his great servant upon every particular, handed to him two tables of stone, on both sides of which he had, with his own finger, written "the Ten Commandments," as the abridgement and groundwork of all his other precepts. Forty days and forty nights were spent in secret interview between God and Moses. During that time the people had forgotten, not only Moses, but the very God whose appearance a few weeks before on the very mountain on which they were, still filled them with such dread and alarm. Not knowing what had become of Moses, they collected around Aaron, and insisted in a threatening manner that, like other nations, they should have an idol that might go before them. Aaron refused not their request, and gave orders that the golden earrings of their wives, sons, and daughters should be brought together. And when they were collected, he melted them down together, and formed the image of a golden calf, which was adored as the god of Israel.

At the very hour that they were adoring the idol, Moses, by the express command of God, came down from the mountain with the two Tables of the Law, in his hand. Amazed at the sounds he heard, he hastened to see what was the cause of them, and as he approached the camp, he found the people dancing and singing round the golden calf. At this sight, grief and indignation filled his breast, and in a transport of rage, he threw down the tables from his hands and broke them in pieces at the foot of the mount; for of what use could they be, he thought, to a people who had blotted the law out of their hearts. He seized the idol they had made, broke it down, and cast it

into the fire, and when it was reduced to powder, he mixed it with water, and gave it to the Israelites to drink. He then marshalled the whole tribe of Levi against the transgressors, and about three and twenty thousand men were put to the sword.

With a heart ready to burst with grief, he returned to the mount, and begged pardon of God for the sins of the people. His fervent prayer was heard, and God was again reconciled to his people. Moses was commanded to hew out two other tables of stone, like those which he had broken, and to go with them to the top of the mountain, where he should receive the same words engraven on them, as had been engraven on the first. In obedience to this order Moses provided himself with two new tablets, and, for the second time, ascended the holy mountain to converse with God. The Lord conversed familiarly with his servant. The conversation lasted for forty days and forty nights. During all this time, Moses neither ate nor drank. After this long conversation with the Lord, Moses took up the two tables of stone on which God had written the ten commandments, and went down the mountain, being ignorant of the change that his long conversation with God had wrought in his countenance; for when he came near to the camp, Aaron and all the Israelites perceived on his face a bright blaze of glory, which made them afraid of going near him. When Moses learned why they were afraid of approaching him, he covered his face with a veil, which he wore ever after, except when he entered the tabernacle to converse with God.

Thus it was that God received his people again into favor, and delivered to them his commandments, written with his own hand, for the second time, on two new tables of stone.

The covenant entered into between God and the Israelites was, "that they should be his people, and he would be their God," on condition that they should keep his commandments.

A sign or seal, however, was wanting to the solemn covenant that was entered into between God and his people. This seal was to be the sprinkling of the people with blood. Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain and offered victims upon it. He took one half of the blood and put it in bowls, and he poured the other half upon the altar. After he had read the words of the covenant to the people, and they had agreed to observe it, he took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and said: "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Moses placed the two tables of stone on which the commandments were written, in the Ark of the Covenant, where they were carefully preserved, and hence it is that the Ark of the Covenant obtained its name.

Thus was the first covenant completed on Mount Sinai, and solemnly sealed with blood, to remain good until the new and better covenant, sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary, should take its place.

18. What do these commandments teach us?

The first three commandments teach us our duties towards God; and the seven other commandments teach us our duties towards our neighbor.

Although the commandments are contained in Holy Writ (Exod. xxi.), yet Holy Writ does not distinctly divide them. It is, indeed, not the division, but the keeping of the commandments, that Holy Scripture inculcates upon

all. The Jews followed an arrangement which divided the first commandment into two, but considered the ninth and tenth commandments as but one. Some of the Fathers of the Church have followed this arrangement. But the present arrangement, as given above, is followed by St. Augustine and other Fathers of the Church, as the most natural; for the latter part of the first commandment is but an explanation of the former. The words, "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing," and "thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them, for I am the Lord thy God"—these words, says St. Thomas, are but an explanation of the great command given in these first words, "Thou shalt have no other God but me."

The reason why God added this explanation especially to this command is because the Israelites were greatly inclined to idolatry, as is clear from their history; and hence it is that God, in the above-mentioned explanation appended to the command, gave to the Jews a special remedy against their proneness to idolatry. As the whole of the first commandment is contained in these words: "Thou shalt have no other God but me," it is great ignorance, or malicious calumny in those Protestants who say that we strike out one of the commandments from the Decalogue by teaching that the words, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing to adore it," are not a commandment distinct from the first.

Now, as to the ninth and tenth commandments, the one is really distinct from the other. The command, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife," is evidently a command quite distinct from, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." These are prohibitions of the internal sinful acts which are different in kind. The one is a sin

of lust, the other a sin of injustice. Now, as God has forbidden, by two distinct commands (the sixth and the seventh), the external distinct acts of lust and injustice—adultery and stealing, so also has he forbidden, by two distinct commands (the ninth and tenth), the internal distinct acts of lust and injustice.

The principal object of our life in this world is our temporal and eternal happiness. This happiness consists in being united to God and to our neighbor by the virtues of justice and charity. Now, to establish and preserve this union, Almighty God has given us formal precepts of justice and charity. These precepts are contained in the Decalogue. The first three commandments, as they prescribe our duties towards God, that is, adoration, respect, and the sanctification of the Sabbath, were written on the first tablet of stone. The principal obstacle to the union of God with his people was idolatry and superstition. To remove this obstacle, God gave the first commandment: "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods before me: thou shalt not make nor adore idols," etc.

A person, however, might avoid the worship of idols, and still might not have due respect for God. Hence the Lord added the second commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Then in order to be worshipped in proper time, and in a proper manner, he commanded public worship in these words: "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." The seven other commandments, as they prescribe our duties of justice and charity towards all our fellow-men, were written on the second tablet of stone. The ten commandments are thus but a development or explanation of the first and greatest law of charity: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbor as thyself."

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

"I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods before me; thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, to adore and serve it."

2. What are we commanded by the first commandment?

We are commanded: 1, to adore and serve only the one true and living God; and, 2, to worship him by faith, hope, and charity.

1. The God who created us—that God on whom we depend every moment of our existence—is a God of infinite majesty and glory.

Look around upon the heavens and the earth, how sublime an idea do they convey of their almighty Architect! What a stupendous mass is the ponderous globe upon which we stand; yet God poises it with one finger! How vast the abyss of its waters; yet he measures it, as Scripture says, in the palm of his hand! How awful is the roar of thunder; it is but the feeble echo of his voice! How terrific the glare of lightning; it is only a faint scintillation of his brightness! All that we see around us, the vast luminaries that roll above us, the earth which we inhabit, with its endless diversity of animals and productions, with man, the lord and master of the whole, once were not. The Almighty spoke one word, and instantly we leaped into being, and we are! How must not the soul and all her faculties sink into insignificance before this idea of her Creator, God. How must not the soul long to adore, and serve only the one true, living God, who is the centre of glory, towards whom tend all the

works of the Creator. Yes, adoration, glory, and honor essentially appertain to God. All that is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, according to St. John, sing in concert the praises of one God, in three persons: and every creature which is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them—he heard all saying: “To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction and honor, and glory, and power, forever and ever.” (Apoc. v., 13.)

The eternal occupation of the Blessed is to chant the sacred Canticle “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts!” (Isai. vi., 3.)

Their Alleluias, their hymns of gladness, are ascending before the throne of God for ever and ever. In purgatory, in a special manner, are exemplified their profound esteem and homage to Almighty God, from the intense desire of the sufferers to enjoy him.

Even hell itself glorifies the Lord, for the reprobate are constrained, in deploring their eternal loss of all the benefits of nature, grace and glory, to offer a reparation of honor to the power of the Father, the author of nature; to the wisdom of the Son, whose grace they have despised, and to the goodness of the Holy Ghost, whose saving inspirations they have criminally rejected.

Amongst all creatures, man is under special obligations to glorify and honor Almighty God. Man is the masterpiece of the creation, a resplendent image of the three divine Persons. God has redeemed man preferably to the angels. In baptism man is consecrated to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, by an inviolable character impressed on his soul. Man, therefore, is under the strictest obligation to adore and serve God and to

practise the virtue of religion in the best manner possible.

The virtue of religion consists in worshipping God, in a manner worthy of him, that is, to worship him by true, faith, hope and charity.

3. What is it to adore God ?

It is to acknowledge him, by inward and outward acts of worship, as our Creator and sovereign Lord.

The word adore, taken in its literal sense, means to carry the hand to the mouth—to kiss the hand through respect. To raise the hand to the lips and to kiss it, is considered, in all Eastern countries, as one of the greatest marks of respect and submission, “Those who adore, kiss the hand,” says St. Jerome. And in the third book of Kings it is said : “I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not bowed before Baal, and every mouth that hath not worshipped him by kissing the hands.” (3. Kings xix.)

Adoration means also a prostration before some person, or making a low respectful bow, either for the purpose of saluting him, or asking some favor of him, or thanking him for some favor received. This mode of salutation was generally practised by the people of the East towards those for whom they entertained deep respect. It is in this sense that the word “adore” is to be taken whenever, in Holy Writ, there is mention made of *adoration* being paid to men or angels ; as for example, in the book of Genesis, where it is said that Abraham, on seeing the three men, “adored down to the ground,” that is, showed to them thus honor, respect and esteem.

When the word “adore” is applied to God, it means the supreme worship which is due to God alone. This

supreme worship consists in acknowledging God as the sovereign, eternal, universal Lord and Creator of heaven and earth, and in confessing our entire dependence on him for every thing that we have and are, and in paying him due homage and respect on account of his infinite Greatness and Majesty. This homage and adoration belong to God alone, and can never, under any circumstances whatever, be rendered to any creature.

Now, we must adore God *inwardly* and *outwardly*. It is true, God does not stand in need of us nor of our worship, but we stand in need of God. We need his grace, his assistance. All that we have, all that we hope for, comes from him. Were he to withdraw from us his assistance for one single moment we would fall into nothingness. How easy is it not for God to displace a portion of the brain, and in a moment we are raving, madmen! How easy is it not for him to stop the throbbing heart, to strike us with apoplexy, and lo! the flickering taper of our life is at once extinguished!

We are made for God. We can never be happy, we can never be perfect, we can never attain the end of our existence without his help. God is our Lord and our Creator. He has an inalienable claim to our obedience and our worship. Has not the artist a right to his work? Has not a father a right to the reverence and obedience of his own son? Has not the husband a right to the love and fidelity of his wife? And God, who is more than a mere artist, more than a father, more than a spouse, has ever so many rights that we are bound to respect; he has especially the inalienable right to our inward and outward adoration.

Now, we adore God *inwardly* when we bow down in

spirit before his infinite majesty; when we protest to him, from the bottom of our heart, that we believe in him, hope in him, and submit ourselves altogether to him as our first principle and last end. It is called *inward* adoration, because we say nothing, do nothing, nor give the least outward sign of the adoration that we are paying to God. This way of adoring God is agreeable to him, for he sees into our hearts; and it has this great advantage, that we can render it to him at all times and in all places, and in the midst of our ordinary occupations and worldly actions. "To adore God" in spirit by some pious ejaculation, now and then, gives no trouble, nor does it require much time, or interrupt, in the least, our external duties. It is a short and easy practice of adoring God, and can be practised on all occasions, without exposing ourselves to the danger of vain-glory, which often attends external adoration.

We adore God *outwardly* when, by some outward sign, we manifest the inward respect we have for God; as for example, by bending the knee, inclining the head, falling prostrate on the ground, signing ourselves with the sign of the cross. These are so many acts of adoration, and are very pleasing to God when they proceed from a heart filled with respect and reverence for him. "Come, let us adore and fall down before the Lord," says King David. The obligation of paying to God *outward* worship has been acknowledged at all times and in all places. There is no nation without its sacrifices, its ceremonies, and its religious feasts. All the saints have practised the external forms of worship; the Church has always recommended the observance of these forms, after the example of Jesus Christ, who, in the garden of Olives, "fell upon his face,

praying to his heavenly Father." Yes, *outward* worship has always been considered as an indispensable duty which man owes to God, because, in the first place, our bodies no less than our souls belong to God, for we were created body and soul on purpose to honor, serve, and adore him, hence he has a full right and title to the homage both of soul and body as both are equally his sole property.

In the second place, *external* adoration flows naturally from internal worship; for soul and body are so united that whatever one feels, the other expresses. When, for instance, the soul is filled with terror, the face turns pale, the body trembles. When the soul is filled with joy, the face smiles, the body dances. When the soul is filled with love and hatred, the face, the whole body betrays the hidden emotion. In like manner when the soul is filled with love and reverence of God, it must express its sentiments by outward signs and ceremonies.

And even were it possible for man to hide his religion in his heart it would not be lawful to do so. Why? Because man is made for society. He must worship God not only as a private individual, but as a member of society. God is the author not only of the individual, but also of society, and consequently he has a right to our worship not only individually but also collectively.

Outward worship, however, must be accompanied by *inward* worship, otherwise it will be unprofitable. If our hearts have no part in what we do or say, our forms of worship, such as bending the knee, inclining the head, falling on the face, making the sign of the cross, are so many forms of deceit and falsehood. As a soulless body is but a loathsome corpse, so, too, outward worship without inward worship is but a counterfeit worship of God.

If we testify outwardly a respect for God which does not proceed from our heart, we are hypocrites, and deserve the reproach which Jesus Christ made to the Jews: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." (Matt. xv.)

2. We adore God by acts of faith, hope, and charity, by prayer, vows, oaths and sacrifice. We adore God by an act of faith when we declare that we believe every thing that has been revealed by him and is proposed for our belief by his Church, no matter, how incomprehensible it may appear to us.

We adore God by an act of hope, when we place all our confidence in him, rely on his power, goodness, mercy, and promises, and expect all necessary favors and blessings from him in this world and the eternal enjoyment of him in the next.

We adore God by an act of charity when we protest that we love him with our whole heart, because he is infinitely good; that we rejoice at all the glory and honor which are given him by the blessed spirits in heaven, and by his faithful servants on earth, that we are resolved, with the assistance of his grace, to give up everything rather than forfeit his grace; that we are willing to submit to his holy will in every thing, and that we resign all that we have, property, reputation and health into his hands to dispose of them as he pleases.

We also adore God by prayer. When we pray to God, we acknowledge him to be our sovereign Lord and the giver of all goods spiritual and temporal; we acknowledge our own weakness, misery and unworthiness, our entire dependence on him. We honor his power by believing that he is able to help us; we honor his goodness

by believing that he is willing to assist us ; we honor his faithfulness to his promises by believing that he will grant us what he has promised to give us through the merits of Jesus Christ.

Vows are also acts of divine worship, for a vow is a promise made to God of something that is pleasing to him ; and God is honored by such a promise. if it is faithfully fulfilled.

An oath taken in regard to what is true, lawful, and important, is another act of worship by which God is honored ; for to call on God to bear witness to truth, is to honor his wisdom and sovereign faithfulness, which can neither deceive nor be deceived.

The most excellent way of adoring God is that of offering *sacrifice* to him ; for in sacrifice there is a particular form and rite used, by which we express the homage which we owe him, and which can be given to God alone. It is in this that sacrifice differs from all other outward actions of respect and reverence, as for example, uncovering the head, bowing, kneeling down, for they are used towards men as well as towards God. All nations, however barbarous and savage, have always acknowledged the obligation of offering sacrifice as a necessary worship due to God. The voice of *reason* and of nature universally proclaims the existence of a Supreme Being on whom all mankind depend for support and preservation. Hence man uses exterior means—the offering of sacrifice to acknowledge thereby the supreme power and dominion of God over all creatures, and to testify to him, the sentiments of gratitude and sovereign homage. The obligation of offering sacrifice is, therefore, generally imposed by the law of nature. It is only divine or human law that specifies

in a particular manner the things to be offered in sacrifice. Hence it is that sacrifices and immolations were not everywhere the same. It is of natural right that the wicked should be punished, but it is only positive or human law that determines the mode of punishment.

Now every man has three kinds of goods which he can offer as sacrifices for the honor and glory of God. First, the goods of the soul: these are inward acts of adoration, devotion, humility, and other spiritual acts. Secondly, the goods of the body: these are chastity, acts of mortification of the senses, and the sacrifice of life by martyrdom. Thirdly, temporal goods, which he can sacrifice to the honor of God, for the relief and support of the poor, or for the erection of churches, hospitals, orphan asylums, schools, convents, and the like.

From the very beginning of the world, sacrifice has always been used by the holy servants of God, as a necessary part of religion and the best means of adoring God. In the earliest times, God made known to his people the manner in which they should worship him. He expressly prescribed several kinds of sacrifices, as the most sacred part of their religion, and so strictly did he demand sacrifice as the worship due to him alone, that the one who should dare to give it to a creature was ordered to be put to death!

But we, Catholics, have the most august sacrifice of the Mass, which is of an infinite value, because it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God himself, who is offered in Mass to his heavenly Father, as a sacrifice of adoration and praise. Hence it is that, by offering up this holy sacrifice, we honor God as much as he deserves to be honored—we honor him in an infinite manner. (See Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, chap. xxiii.)

Here two useful questions may be asked, viz. : where should we worship God, and when should we worship him ?

As to the first question, St. Thomas says, " that a special place for divine worship is not absolutely necessary for God, as he is present everywhere, but it is necessary for man, who is obliged to pay God the tribute of his homage and gratitude." Hence churches are erected in honor of the Most High, in order that, in them, we may honor and worship God with more fervor and devotion. We know from experience, that the sacred character of the church, the grand celebration of the mysteries of our holy religion, and the fervor and devotion of our fellow-Christians tend to inspire us with greater fervor and devotion in worshipping God and asking divine favors of him. The best place for divine worship, therefore, is a church, in which our Lord dwells in the Blessed Sacrament. There, indeed, the Lord is in the midst of those who are assembled together in his name, to receive their homage and to hear their prayers. (See Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, chapter xlvii.)

As to the second question, namely, when should we make acts of adoration, I answer, that as we should always be disposed to prefer God to every thing else, we are obliged always to adore him.

Besides this general obligation, every good Christian makes acts of adoration on awaking in the morning, and at night before he retires to rest. In the morning, he gives his first thought to God, offers his heart to him in prayer, and consecrates to him the actions of the day. In the evening, he thanks God for all his blessings and asks pardon for his sins. On Sundays and holidays of obligation,

he often adores God, because these days have been set aside by the Church in order that God should be worshipped in a more special manner.

But good and fervent Christians are not satisfied with worshipping God only in the morning and at night, and on Sundays and holidays; they often think of him, and pray to him during the day.

St. Teresa was accustomed to offer herself to God fifty times in the day. St. Martha used to pray to God a hundred times every day, and a hundred times every night. The Apostle St. Bartholomew used to offer to God two hundred adorations every day. When St. Patrick was guarding his master's flock, he prayed to God a hundred times a day, and a hundred times every night. He also made three hundred genuflections every day in honor of the Blessed Trinity. The saints drew great spiritual profit from these frequent acts of adoration. These acts were a means by which they felt powerfully drawn towards God, more closely united to him, and enabled to lead a holy life on earth. Let us imitate their example, in order that we, too, may become saints.

4. Which are the sins against the adoration of God?

The sins against the adoration of God are: Superstition and irreligion.

From the beginning of the world, Satan has tried to induce men to pay him the supreme honor of adoration which is due to God alone. He seduced the greater part of mankind to commit the sins opposed to the virtue of religion—the sins of superstition and irreligion.

There are many who absurdly enough deny the personal existence of Satan. They assert, with an air of profound

wisdom, that the word "devil," "Satan," is simply the imaginary personification of all the evil influences to which we are subject in this life. But what can be more absurd than to deny what all nations, without exception, have always believed, and still believe—the *personal existence of the devil*. What can be more impious than to deny what we find asserted in plain words, on almost every page of Holy Writ—the *personal existence of the devil*.

Holy Scripture tells us that Satan, in the form of a serpent, seduced Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit; it declares that all the gods of the Gentiles *are devils*; it tells us that the devil is the prince of this world; that he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; it bids us resist the devil, and he will flee from us: St. Paul speaks of the prince and the powers of the air that besiege us, and against whom we must put on the whole armor of God, and do valiant battle.

Moreover, Holy Scripture speaks of demoniacs, or persons possessed with devils; and among the marvellous works ascribed to Jesus Christ, is that of *expelling demons, or casting out devils*.

The Catholic Church plainly and unequivocally recognizes the existence of Satan, as may be gathered from the prayers and ceremonies of Baptism, as well as from the significance of the Sacrament itself; and not only his existence, but his power over the natural man, and even material objects. The Catholic Church has also her exorcists, and her precise forms and prayers for exorcising evil spirits.

Besides, every Christian knows that the Son of God became man and died upon the cross for no other purpose than to destroy the works of the devil, and to redeem mankind from his power.

Now, to assert that there is no devil is to assert that Jesus Christ suffered so much from no motive, that his mission had no object; it is to deny the work of Redemption. *What can be more blasphemous than such an assertion?*

Again, what can be more *contrary to sound reason* than to deny the existence of the devil? They who deny the personal existence of the devil must either deny the existence of evil altogether, which is absurd, or they must admit the existence of an unbeginning—*eternal principle of evil*—which is a palpable blasphemy.

God alone has existed from all eternity. By his word he has created heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible. God, in his infinite wisdom, created beings gifted with intelligence and free will, and consequently, capable of acting wrong as well as right. All the works of God, when they came forth from his hands were good, very good. It was, then, by the abuse of their intelligence and free-will, it was by refusing to observe the just laws of God, that his creatures became wicked, and that evil was introduced into the world.

Satan and his hosts were created by God as bright and beautiful angels; but of their own free will, they rebelled against God. "Behold they that serve God are not steadfast, and in his angels he found wickedness." (Job, iv., 18.) Considered in their nature the angels could sin just as well as man, for the gift of impeccability is not a gift of nature, but of grace alone.

It was natural for all the angels to love and glorify God, the only source of their eternal glory; but, in the rebel angels, soon after their creation, that divine love was extinguished by an abuse of free-will. They sinned

in wishing through pride and envy, their own particular good, in opposition to the will of their Sovereign Creator. By these two sins, the chief of the rebel angels seduced vast multitudes of angels. "From pride all perdition took its beginning." (Tob. iv., 14.) "Pride is the source of all sins." (Ecclus. x., 15.) "Satan is the king of all the children of pride." (Job. xli., 25.) "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer? Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High." (Isai. xiv., 12, 13.)

What the bad angels wished to obtain by their rebellion was to be like unto God; they wished to be equal to him in splendor and glory, but not in power, for they knew it was impossible for any created being to be equal to God in his infinite power. Their transgression consisted in wishing to be like unto God without merit or supernatural grace. Their pride and envy confounded them, and God abandoned them in that state of perversity.

They also aspired after pre-eminence and domination over all in the new creation, which was an additional crime to their blasphemous culpability, by which they forfeited eternal glory. "Thou (Lucifer) wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. * * * Thou wast in all the delight of God's Paradise; thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee. Thou hast defiled the sanctuaries of heaven by the multitude of thy iniquities; thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty. Therefore I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee to devour thee. * * * " (Ezech. xxviii.)

The prevarication of the highest angel in the celestial

hierarchy was the cause of the defection of all the rest. The pride of Lucifer, prince of the cherubim, and chief of the rebel angels, was the first provocation to the disobedience of all the others. It cannot be supposed that he constrained them, but seduced them to rebel; for it is said in the Gospel: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv., 41.) "And the dragon's tail drew away the third part of the stars of heaven." (Apoc. xii., 4.)

Now, the order of divine justice requires that whoever commits a crime at the instigation of another, must undergo the same penalty as the author. St. Peter says: "Man becomes the slave of him by whom he is overcome."

The rebel angels were not long in deliberating as to whether they should follow Lucifer, nor was a long discourse necessary to excite them to rebellion. Angels are as quick as lightning in all their operations. They instantaneously, though freely, consented to the sentiments which were manifested in their spiritual language by their powerful chief. The moment they rebelled, they were changed into hideous demons, and cast out of heaven. They are so obstinate in perversity that they can never be free from their diabolical propensities. Their crime has fixed them for ever in wickedness, as death fixes man irrevocably either in glory or in damnation.

An angel conceives all things instantaneously, by means of his spiritual faculties, as man does conceive the first principles of right and wrong by means of his intellectual faculties. Man is changeable and inconstant in his

choice; but the angel fixes his choice irrevocably by the first act of his will. That act, in the choice of divine love and obedience, was the cause of eternal beatitude for the faithful angels, and that instantaneous free act of the rebel angels, was the cause of their everlasting punishment and damnation. As the glorification of the good angels increases more and more in heaven, so the torments of the wicked angels increase proportionately in hell. "And there was a great battle in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the Dragon and his angels; and that great dragon, that old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world, was cast out of heaven with all his angels. And they were thrown down with the beast and false prophets, into a pool of fire and brimstone, where they shall be tormented day and night during ages and ages." (Apoc. xii.)

The rebel angels have two places of torture: hell, where they shall remain eternally, to undergo the punishment of their crime; and the dark, gloomy air, where they shall be till the day of general judgment.

As God makes use of the good angels to inspire us with acts of virtue and keep us from vice, so he permits the devil to lay snares for us and entice us to sin. St. Paul tells us that numbers of those wicked spirits surround us on all sides. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of darkness, and the spirits of wickedness in the high places." (Eph. vi., 12.) Hence it is that they are called the Princes of darkness, of the air, and of the world. They differ in order; for though they never enjoyed the order of heavenly glory, and forfeited, by their disobedience, the order of grace and the supernatural

gifts with which they were endowed at their creation, yet they have preserved the order of their nature, so that those whose natural intellectual faculties were greater are higher in rank and greater in power. Hence they form a kind of hierarchy. Their prince and chief is sometimes called Lucifer, who was the prince of the cherubim; sometimes Belial (that is, the Rebel), also Satan (*i. e.*, the Enemy), or Beelzebub, from the chief idol of the Accaronites.

The rage, malice, and envy of the devils against man, and their enmity to all good, are implacable. Satan, the chief of the fallen spirits, makes his attacks upon men by putting on all shapes: sometimes by craft, or by snares and stratagems, as the old serpent; sometimes by disguises, transforming himself into an angel of light, and assuming the air of piety; sometimes by open assaults and violence, as the roaring lion.

He studies and observes every one's character, natural dispositions, inclinations, virtues and vices, to find out, and make his attacks on every one's weak points.

The natural subtlety and strength of Satan are exceedingly great, as appears from the perfection of his being, which is purely spiritual, and from examples, when God has suffered him to exert his power in a more remarkable manner. Holy Scripture tells us that the devils hurried the swine into the lake; that they killed the first seven husbands of Sara; that they have slain armies in one night; have often disturbed nature, and stirred up tempests, which struck whole provinces with terror, and ravaged the whole world.

What did Satan not do against holy Job?

He killed his cattle and his children. He covered Job himself with ulcers from head to foot.

And, in our own day, what did he not do against the saintly Curé of Ars, in France, for the space of thirty years ?

Moreover, by clear proofs, it is also manifest that Satan can, by divine permission, enter our bodies, compel, as it were, the human being to stand aside, and use our organs himself, and do whatever he pleases with them. But he cannot annihilate the human being, or take from the soul its free-will. It is always in the power of the possessed to resist, morally and effectually, the evil intentions of the devil. The possessed person retains his own consciousness, his own intellectual and moral faculties unimpaired, and he never confounds himself with the spirit that possesses him. He always retains the power of internal protest and struggle. Whenever this power is exercised, and there is clearly a struggle, there is no reason to believe that he is responsible for the crimes which the body, through the possession of the devil, is made to commit. But unfortunately it very often happens that this power to protest is not exercised, and the possessed person yields his moral assent to the crimes committed by the demon that possesses him.

Such diabolical possessions have been more or less frequent in different times and places. This is confirmed by the testimony and experience of all ages, and of all nations, even to the remotest Indies. Such facts both the Old and New Testaments evince.

However, with regard to the effects of magic and possession of devils, the Catholic Church says, in her Ritual, that such extraordinary effects are not to be easily supposed. That superstition, credulity, and imposture are to be guarded against, and that natural distempers.

such as certain species of madness, extraordinary palsies, epilepsies, or the like, are not to be construed into effects of enchantments or possessions, which are not to be presumed upon ridiculous compacts and signs, nor upon vulgar prejudices and notions of the manner in which such things are done, but must be made apparent by circumstances.

The criteria of demoniac invasion or possession, as laid down by the Catholic Church for the guidance of exorcists, are the following :—

1. Understanding of unknown languages.
2. Power of speaking unknown or foreign languages.
3. Knowledge of things passing in distant places.
4. Exhibition of superior physical strength.
5. Suspension of the body in the air during a considerable time.

Although Satan, with implacable envy and malice, studies to disturb our temporal happiness and to compass our eternal ruin both by stratagems and open assaults, yet it is certain that he can tempt and assail us only to a certain degree; he can go only the length of his chain, that is, as far as God permits him. This is evident from the history of Job. Before Satan was bound, or his power curbed by the triumph of Christ over him, and the spreading of the happy light and influence of the Gospel throughout the world, the empire which Satan exercised on earth was much greater than since that time. However, there can be no doubt that, in our own days, the power and influence of Satan over an immense number of men is great, very great; and it will increase in proportion as they approach heathenism and infidelity, and leave the true, the Catholic religion.

After these remarks on the power and influence of Satan over mankind, it will be more easy to understand the grievousness of the sins of superstition and irreligion.

5. What is superstition ?

Superstition is to believe that some things or persons have a certain power which they cannot have, either by nature, or by the prayers of the Church, or from God.

Superstition, taken in its general sense, means the turning away from the true and living God, and having recourse to the devil for help, instead of seeking it from the Lord ; it is the withdrawal of one's self from the Providence of God, and from the ordinary means appointed by him to gain what we want, and the confiding in the assistance of the devil, by using means appointed by him to obtain what we desire. But superstition, as it is usually understood, means a false notion of religion which fills us with a foolish and excessive confidence in certain things, or which inspires us with a frivolous and excessive fear of some other things, as being endowed with a supernatural virtue which they have not, or possessing it in a higher degree than they do in reality. There are four kinds of superstition, namely : idolatry, attendance at the false worship of the true God, divination, and superstitious practices.

6. What is idolatry ?

Idolatry is to pay divine honor to a creature.

When giving his commandments to the Israelites, God commenced by telling them that he was their Lord and their God ; that it was he that brought them out from the land of Egypt, and released them from the slavery in which they groaned under Pharaoh. " I am the Lord thy

God," he says; that is, I am he who created every thing—heaven, earth, sun, moon, stars; who rules every thing, and on whom every thing depends; I am your Creator, your Master, your Sovereign Lord, your Judge, from whose goodness you have every thing to hope, but from whose justice you have, too, every thing to fear—and I, "the Lord thy God," command you "not to have any strange gods before me."

What the strange gods are he goes on to tell them: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of these things that are in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them." (Exodus, xx.) We here see that God prohibits all persons from making "a graven thing," or engraving any image or likeness in order to *adore and serve it*. He tells every one of us, as well as the Israelites, that if we make idols—figures of stone, of wood, or of other matter—as the Pagans did, and if we *adore* them, and pay them homage, he will punish us with the greatest severity, because as he says: "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."

They are called "strange gods," because such gods should be unknown to God's chosen people, who should recognize but the one true God, whom Noah taught his children to adore. St. Paul calls Noah a preacher of justice, because he taught his sons the knowledge of the one true God, and of a Messiah that was to come, and gave them commandments by which they might know what is right and what is wrong. However, it was the misfortune of his descendants that they did not preserve this knowledge. Instead of continuing to adore the God

of heaven, that pure Spirit who cannot be seen by mortal eyes, they began to wish for objects of adoration, which they might be able to see; and so they were led to make images, or "graven things," which they soon began to worship as gods. This worship is called idolatry, which means the worship of an idol or image of a false god. At the time of the coming of Christ, this great sin prevailed everywhere save in one single corner of the earth—Judea.

There were several causes of idolatry. Most men, from the beginning, lost gradually the knowledge of God, and of the doctrine of creation. But man, wishing to have some kind of divinity, strove to find it in material objects. Astonished at the grandeur, beauty and splendor of certain things, such as the sun, moon and the stars, they took them for gods and worshipped them as such. Hence it is said in Holy Writ: "But all men who have not the knowledge of God are vain, and could not understand or acknowledge the Sovereign Creator of all these great works, but have imagined that the fire, the wind, the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun, or the moon were the gods that rule the world." (Wisd. xiii, 1, 2.)

Another cause of idolatry was the inordinate affections of the heart. A father bitterly afflicted by the sudden death of his son, had a likeness of him made, and then began to worship it as a god, and appointed sacrifices to be offered to him by his servants. Hence we read in Holy Scripture: "A father being bitterly afflicted, made to himself the image of his son who was quickly taken away; and him who then had died as a man, he began now to worship as a god, and appointed him rites and sacrifices among his servants." (Wisd. xiv., 15.)

Again, man is full of vanity, curiosity, natural perversity, and, if ignorant, is easily influenced by beautiful works of art. Thus it happened that the common people took for gods, the images or statues of celebrated heroes, or of kings who were powerful and liberal to their subjects, and paid them divine honor. Hence Holy Scripture says: "Then (man in his folly and ignorance) maketh prayer to it, inquiring concerning his substance, his children, or his marriage, and is not ashamed to speak to that which hath no life." (Wisd. xiii., 17.)

Now, Satan, the arch-enemy of mankind, availed himself of these abominable mistakes and errors, of that universal ignorance and corruption, to make himself worshipped by men. So when the idols were spoken to or consulted, he answered from within them, or he performed a kind of prodigies that struck men with astonishment and admiration. Hence the Royal Prophet says: "All the gods of the Gentiles are devils." (Ps. xcvi., 5.)

The idolatry of the heathens is, no doubt, a most abominable crime in the sight of God. But there is another kind of idolatry which is committed by many Christians—an idolatry of the heart, which consists in loving a creature so passionately as to be induced to renounce God and his friendship, rather than that disorderly love for his creature. It is in this sense that St. Paul calls all those idolaters who are given up to the passion of impurity and covetousness. (Eph. v., 5.)

One of the most celebrated martyrs of the Church is St. Sebastian. Even before he had confessed the faith in torments, he had become famous by the prodigies which he wrought. The governor of Rome, named Chromatius, who was afflicted with incurable infirmities, sent for him,

hoping that he would be cured by him. When St. Sebastian appeared before the governor, he spoke to him of our Lord Jesus Christ, and told him that it was in his name and by his power he performed all the miracles of which he had heard. "Well!" said Chromatius to him, "let Jesus Christ cure me, and I promise him that I will become a Christian." "That is not enough," replied St. Sebastian, "commence by breaking all your idols, and I promise you, you shall be cured." Chromatius promised him, and they parted. Some days after, more tortured than ever, the governor sent again for the generous Sebastian, and began bitterly to reproach him: "How is this, thou wretched Christian! At thy word I broke all my idols, and behold I suffer more than ever!" "Is it true, my lord, that you have broken all your idols? have you spared none?" "No, I broke them all, except one little golden statue, which I value very highly, because it has been a long time in our family." "Ah my lord, I am no longer surprised that you have not been cured; were that idol dearer to you than all the world, you must destroy it; because you cannot, in conscience, prefer it to the God who has created you, who preserves you, and will one day judge you. Break it, and I tell you again I will answer for your cure." Chromatius now broke his golden statuette to pieces, and was perfectly cured. (LASSAUSSE, *Explic. du Cat. de l'Empire*, 571.)

There are many Christians who resemble this Roman governor. They break to pieces many idols of their heart except one; they go to confession and accuse themselves of all their mortal sins except one; they renounce many proximate occasions of sin, except one; they forgive all their neighbors except one; they restore many ill-gotten

goods except one ; they believe all the truths of the Catholic religion except one. Hence they remain sick in soul, and often in body, until they have renounced the idol of their heart.

7. What is attendance at false worship ?

It is to assist at the religious worship of heretics.

To worship God according to a rite contrary to all precepts of the Gospel is a false and unlawful worship of God. Hence it would be a grievous sin for a Catholic to worship God according to the ceremonial laws of the Jews, for though they were prescribed by God for the Jews before the coming of Christ, yet they were abolished by Christ in the new law.

It is also a false and unlawful worship of God to adopt a new religion in opposition to the doctrine of the true Church of Jesus Christ, the Roman Catholic Church, and assist at the religious worship of such a false religion. Hence, even if a Catholic despises in his heart such a false religion and worship, it is unlawful for him to play the organ, or to sing, or to discharge the office of sacristan, in Jewish or Protestant temples during their false worship, or to compose hymns or music for the same, or to ring the bell for calling the people together, or to contribute money towards the erection of temples for false worship, or to call a Protestant minister for the performance of some religious rites, as, for instance, the rites of marriage or baptism, or funeral, etc.; or to take Protestant children, or accompany grown persons, to Protestant Sunday-schools or church and stay with them during their religious worship. Any such act is strictly forbidden by the law of God and of the Church, because it is

a real communication and formal co-operation in a false worship, and a real approval of it. "No one," say the Fathers of the Fourth Council of Carthage (in 398), "must either pray, or sing psalms with heretics; and whosoever shall communicate with those who are cut off from the communion of the Church, whether clergyman or layman, let him be excommunicated." Such was the language of the Church in all ages.

Pope Paul IV. wrote to the Catholics in England: "We are forced to admonish and to conjure you, that *on no account* you go to the churches of heretics, or hear their sermons or join in their rites, lest ye incur the wrath of God; for it is not lawful for you to do such things without dishonoring God and hurting your own souls." In consequence of such authoritative decision, the Catholic pastors of England and Scotland have made most strict prohibitions of all such communication by their special regulations.

Here one may say: The reason why I play the organ, or sing, or officiate as sacristan, etc., in a Protestant church, is because I get a good pay which enables me to support my family. I answer: What you do is a grievous violation of the first commandment. It is never allowed to commit a mortal sin in order to acquire the means of support. Alas! that there are so many people who make a living by unlawful means! "But the bishop, or parish priest has given me permission to play the organ, to sing, etc., in the Protestant church," says another one. I answer: Neither any priest nor bishop, nay, not even the Pope, can give you permission to violate any of the commandments.

"But I am well instructed in my religion," says another;

"I can see no harm in what I do in the Protestant church." I answer: I doubt what you say. If you were well instructed, you would know that attendance at false worship is a mortal sin, and that this sin is still greater for him who plays, or sings, at it, or renders any other kind of service for it. And do you see no harm in committing a mortal sin? Do you see no harm in the great scandal you give to those Catholics who know of it, and to the Protestants, whom by your playing and singing, etc., you confirm in the belief that their religion is as good as the Catholic religion? (See Bishop Hay's *Sincere Christian*, vol. ii. On communicating with those out of the Church; and Father A. Konings' *C. SS. R., Moral Theology, de Co-operatione Catholicorum*. p., 136.)

St. Hermenegild, the son of Leovigild, king of Spain, became a convert to the Catholic faith. When his father, who was addicted to the Arian heresy, heard of it, he became quite enraged, and put his son in a frightful dungeon, where he made him suffer most cruel torments. The holy martyr wrote to his father: "I avow your goodness to me has always been very great. I will preserve, to the last moment of my life, the respect, duty, and tenderness which I owe you. But is it possible that you should wish me to like worldly greatness better than my salvation? I value the crown as nothing. I am ready to lose sceptre and life, too, rather than abandon the divine truth."

The prison was a school of virtue to this great martyr. He clothed himself in sack-cloth, and performed other bodily penances in addition to the hardships of his prison. He offered up to God many fervent prayers to obtain sufficient strength and courage to remain faithful in confessing the truth and dying for it.

The solemnity of Easter being come, the perfidious father sent, in the night, an Arian bishop with the message to his son that, if he received communion from the hand of that prelate, he would be received into favor again. Hermenegild, however, rejected the proposal with indignation, reproaching the messenger with the impiety of his sect, as if he had been at full liberty. When the bishop returned to the Arian king with this account, the furious father, seeing the faith of his son proof against all his endeavors to make him give up the Catholic religion, sent soldiers with orders to kill him. They entered the prison and found the saint fearless and ready to receive the stroke of death. They cleaved his head with an axe, and scattered his brains on the floor. (Butler's Lives of the Saints, April 13.)

8. What is divination ?

Divination consists in having recourse to the power and influence of the devil by a tacit or express compact, in order to know past, or present, or future things.

The devil, as we have said, possesses still great natural powers which God gave to the angels when he created them. Satan did not lose those powers by his rebellion against God. He is, moreover, assisted by an experience of thousands of years, during which he observed the ways of men and the laws of nature. Hence, he can easily foresee and do certain things that are hidden from us. He can know such things as are actually in existence or are past. He can also know such future things as are the natural effects of such natural causes as he knows produce their infallible effects. Hence, he can foretell certain future, natural things, as an astronomer can foretell an

eclipse of the sun or the moon by his knowledge of the revolutions of the planets. But to consult the devil even about these things is a great sin, because God has forbidden any kind of dealing with Satan, for this enemy of God and man uses his power only for opposing God's holy will and causing the ruin of man. The devil, however, does not know such future things as depend on God's will. To attempt, then, by the assistance of the devil, to know and foretell such things is to attribute to him who is but a mere creature, an eternal perfection of God—the privilege of knowing all things—and to do this is to be guilty of a most grievous sin. We read in Holy Scripture that when King Ochozias was very sick, he sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron, whether he would recover from his illness. This sin was so great that the Lord sent an angel to the prophet Elias directing him to go and meet the messengers and say to them: "Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go and consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore thus saith the Lord: From the bed on which thou are lying thou shalt not arise; but thou shalt surely die. So he died according to the word of the Lord which Elias spoke." (IV. Kings, chap. i., 2, 4, 16, 17.)

There are other kinds of divination, such as necromancy or spiritism, astrology, witchcraft, sorcery, fortune-telling, spells, charms, dreams, and a great variety of other superstitious practices, which are the abominable remains of idolatry.

9. What is necromancy, or spiritism, or spiritualism?

Necromancy, or Spiritism, is to believe that the spirits or souls of the dead communicate with men, by rapping and moving furniture, or by writing, or seeing, or speaking mediums.

Necromancy is the invocation of the dead, who seem

to appear in their natural state, to answer whatever questions are proposed to them. In our day, and especially in our country, necromancy is practised under the name of *Spiritism*. Now, can Spirits appear to the living on earth ?

When the soul has left the body, and has been judged by God, it at once enters either heaven, or hell, or purgatory. But can it leave any of these places, at least for a short time, and return to this world, in order to warn its surviving friends, or any other persons ? Or, in other words, can there be, or have there been such things as "spirits" or spectres ? It is certain that the belief in "spirits"—a belief spread far and wide—can be traced back to the earliest times. People of every nation, even the most barbarous and uncivilized, are, or have been, of opinion that souls, after death, can return to this world, assume terrestrial or ærial forms, make noise, howl, and speak. In this there is nothing opposed to common sense, nothing surpassing the almighty power of God.

"When a soul has been separated from the body," says Bergier, "God can make it appear again in the world, give it the same body which it had before, or some other body, and endow it with the power of performing the very same functions it had performed before death. This is one of the most striking means which God could employ in instructing men and rendering them tractable." It is, then, absolutely possible that souls after death can again appear in the world.

That souls after death have returned to this world, we have no less an authority than the Sacred Writings. We are told in the Gospel, that Moses with Elias appeared on Mount Thabor at the time of Our Lord's transfiguration ; and that at the death of Christ, and after his resurrection,

“many bodies of the saints that had slept arose ; and coming out of the tombs, after his resurrection, came into the holy city, and appeared to many.” (Matt. xxvii., 52.) In the Second Book of Machabeus, we read that Jeremias, with the holy Pontiff, Onias, appeared, though in a vision, to Judas Machabeus, and presented him with a sword of gold, saying : “ Take this holy sword a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of My people Israel.” (II. Mach. xv., 16.) We read, too, in the First Book of Kings, that the Prophet Samuel appeared after death to the Witch of Endor, and that he prophesied and foretold to Saul the evils which were soon to befall him.

St. Thomas unhesitatingly says, that Samuel appeared in person : and St. Augustine thus speaks in his *Questions to Simplicius* : “ It is not absurd to believe that God permitted the prophet to appear to the king, that he might inspire him with a salutary fear.” The same holy doctor, in his letter to Evodius, bishop, makes mention of a young man who appeared to a great many persons after his death ; and by that means, he adds, God permitted that they should be confirmed in the opinion which they had of his sanctity. Eusebius, St. Paulinus, Origen, Sulpicius, Severus, Theodoret, and other writers, recount in their works many instances of persons who returned after death to this world.

St. Augustine assures us that St. Felix, the martyr, appeared to the inhabitants of Nola when besieged by barbarous tribes, and by his presence encouraged them to fight valiantly and gain a glorious victory. St. Gregory the Great relates, also, many instances of souls in purgatory, whom God, in his mercy, permitted to appear to their

friends on earth and ask them to relieve them in their sufferings by prayers and other good works.

In my little book, "Purgatorian Consoler," I have related several instances of such apparitions.

There is a remarkable apparition related of what is called the "White Lady," in Baireuth, Germany. In that place, there are two pictures of the White Lady. One is in the new castle and the other in a hermitage. The latter is in the costume of a shepherdess and dressed in white. The one in the castle, on the contrary, is dressed in black, and wearing a cap or hood. The spectre of the White Lady always appears in the latter costume, and seems to be an exact image of the picture. The whole affair was juridically examined; the sworn testimony of witnesses was taken down, and all came to the conclusion that the apparition was real. Count Munster, the guardian of the castle, a man of learning and calm judgment, declared positively that he had often met the apparition in the castle, and carefully avoided the room where the picture was hanging. In 1806, as the French army was marching through Baireuth, the spirit became restless and caused so much disturbance in the castle that the French generals who had taken up their quarters there, were greatly annoyed and terrified. In 1809, General d'Espagne, commander of the reserves of the 8th army corps, lodged in the castle. About midnight, a wild shriek resounded from his room. The officers rushed thither and found the general in the middle of the room, lying under the heavy bedstead which had been upset. He was greatly excited. As soon as he grew calmer he related how he had seen an apparition and described her appearance, so that it corresponded exactly with the picture. The spirit

threatened to strangle him, then pushed the bed into the middle of the room, and upset it. He left the castle that very night. Next day he ordered that the room should be thoroughly searched, the wainscoting removed to see if there were a secret door or passage, but he could discover nothing.

Napoleon I. was twice in Baireuth. The first time was on May 14th, 1812, when he was on his way to Russia. He lodged in the castle. A courier was sent with the express orders that the emperor did not wish to be lodged in the room in which the White Lady usually appeared, and that no one should be allowed to enter the room prepared for him but the emperor himself. A few hours before Napoleon's arrival, Count Munster went through the castle to see whether every thing was in order, and to his amazement saw a lady walking through the corridor. Indignant that his orders had been disobeyed, he was about to order the stranger away, when she turned around and to his horror he saw it was the White Lady. The spectre then vanished. Next morning Napoleon appeared greatly annoyed and excited. He repeated several times the words: "Ce maudit chateau!" and declared he would never spend another night there again. He enquired about the appearance and costume of the White Lady, and when they offered to bring him the picture, he positively refused to see it. On August 3rd, 1813, Napoleon came again to Baireuth. A courier was dispatched with orders that the emperor would not lodge in the new castle. They prepared a room for him in the old one. But when Napoleon came to Baireuth, he refused to spend the night there and went on to the next tower. The soul of the White Lady was released by a descendant of hers, a

young girl who looks very much like the picture in the hermitage. She was still alive in 1850.

"There is, however," says St. Thomas, "a great difference between the souls of the saints and those of the damned. The souls of the saints can appear at will, for the sanctification of the faithful, but the latter can never appear without a special permission from God, a permission that God may grant for the terror of the wicked, to make them sensible of the eternal torments of hell."

In the life of St. Bruno, there is an account given of a doctor of Paris, who appeared on the third day after his death, and related how he had been accused, judged, and condemned to most excruciating tortures; and the description which he gave of what happened to him, was such as to make all who heard him shudder. There have been, therefore, and there may be still, instances of persons appearing again in this world after death.

Now, though there may be, and in reality have been, well authenticated accounts of persons who have returned from the other world, and have been seen again on earth, yet we must not conclude that all the stories that we hear told at the fireside, by night, or at wakes and meetings, about spectres and ghosts, are true. Of a thousand stories of this sort, there is not one that turns out to be true; and even apparitions, of the reality of which there is scarcely a doubt entertained, can be explained, in almost every case, in a natural way.

A great number of stories we hear about spirits which, when closely examined, have turned out to be purely the result of deception, skill, and artifice. At one time we find that the pretended ghost, of which we heard so much, was no other than a young man of the neighborhood, who, in order

that he might, without being discovered, keep up an illicit familiarity with a female in the house, so disguised himself as to be thought "a spirit." At another time, the "spirit" spoken of as making its appearance in a certain house, and there uttering unearthly sounds, and making fearful noises, turns out, on close examination, to be no less a personage than a noted thief, who, to secure himself from detection, had recourse to those means of imposing on the credulity of those living in the house. Again, the report that a certain house is haunted has gained ground, and no one can be induced to live in a place where it is believed spirits are roaming about at night, and turning everything upside down; but in a few months it transpires that all this had been effected by one who had lately been ejected from the dwelling, and wanted to prevent others from taking it.

There are, too, a great number of apparitions, which, though supposed real, can be traced to fear, or to an excited imagination; as, for example, something white is seen at night standing against a hedge, at the end of a narrow road, and it is no sooner seen than it disappears in some unaccountable way. A report immediately gets abroad that it was a "spirit," as, at the time it was seen, plaintive cries were heard. But in reality, the spirit was no other than a frightened poor beast!

A gentleman was benighted, not long ago, in a remote part of the highlands of Scotland, and was compelled to ask shelter for the evening at a small, lonely hut. When he was to be conducted to his bedroom, the landlady observed, with a mysterious air, that he would find the window very insecure. On examination, part of the wall appeared to have been broken down to enlarge the opening.

After some inquiry he was told that a pedler, who had lodged in the room a short time before, had committed suicide, and was found hanging behind the door in the morning. According to the superstition of the country, it was deemed improper to remove the body through the door of the house, and to convey it through the window part of the wall was removed. Some hints were dropped that the room had subsequently been haunted by the poor man's spirit. The gentleman retired to rest rather uneasy; and, to protect himself, laid his fire-arms by the bed-side. He was visited in a dream by a frightful apparition, and awaking in agony, found himself sitting up, with a pistol grasped in his right hand. On casting a fearful glance around the room, he discovered, by the moonlight, a corpse dressed in a shroud, reared erect against the wall close by the window. With much difficulty he summoned up courage to approach the dismal object, the features of which, and the minutest part of its funeral shroud, he perceived distinctly. He passed one hand over it, felt nothing, and staggered back to bed. After some time, and much reasoning with himself, he renewed his investigation and at length discovered that the object of his terror was produced by the moonbeams, forming a long bright image through the broken window, on which his fancy, excited by his dream, had pictured, with mischievous accuracy, the form of a body prepared for interment.

The appearance of spectres and phantoms can be very often traced to a mind ill at ease, and to a conscience torn with remorse. Persons guilty of enormous and unnatural crimes, who have during life, for example, ill-treated their parents, relatives, or friends, to such an extent as to be the cause of their death, or have been guilty of

seducing from the paths of virtue many young and innocent souls, are peculiarly predisposed for seeing spirits. Conscience speaks to them of guilt—its voice cannot be hushed. They cannot rest night or day, owing to the remembrance of what they have done. The victims of their crimes present themselves to their minds continually. They tremble, they shudder, at the vivid picture before their eyes. Their imagination becomes so heated, that, in the darkness of night, they think they clearly see frightful apparitions, reproaching and threatening them for their evil deeds—that their fathers are before them on the way cursing them, and their wives upbraiding them with terrible imprecations.

Apparitions or ghosts can be very often traced to a gloomy and melancholy turn of mind; and it is worthy of remark, that ghosts were never so numerous in England as during some years after the civil war in 1649. The gloomy tendency of the rigid Puritans of that period, their possession of the old family seats, formerly the residence of hospitality and good cheer, but, in their hands, dismal, dark, and desolate, and the fearfully thrilling stories circulated far and wide by the old retainers of these ancient establishments, after they had been dismissed, contributed altogether to produce a wide-spread terror, unknown in other periods of the history of the country.

The little that we have said on this subject will probably explain all the wonderful things that have been said about ghosts and spirits. As we said before, so we now say, that the apparition of what we call "spirits" is possible, for God is all-powerful, and the soul is immortal. Because persons have been deceived in a thousand causes of apparitions, it does not follow that in no case can it

be proved that a soul has appeared again in this world after death. On this subject we should incline neither to too great credulity, nor to absolute unbelief, but hold a middle course. Nearly all the accounts that have appeared of "spirits," says Salgues, in his book on *Popular Errors and Prejudices*, "are formed of puerilities." Ears pulled, bed-clothes removed, tables upset, candles extinguished, vessels broken, curtains drawn aside, chairs displaced, and the like, form the burden of stories about ghosts. After these preliminary remarks on the apparition of spirits, it will be more easy to understand what necromancy or spiritism is.

It is now over thirty years (1847) since the notorious Fox girls began to attract public attention by their spirit-rappings. At first, the spirits communicated by rapping and moving furniture; but, now besides rapping mediums, there are writing mediums, seeing and speaking mediums. Modern science is altogether unable to account for, or to disprove, the alleged facts of spiritualism, but this is because modern science, or rather what passes for science, refuses to acknowledge the existence of the superhuman and supernatural. To deny the reality of *all* the alleged spirit manifestations, is to discredit all human testimony; and to regard them all as jugglery, as the result of trickery, is equally absurd. No one, who reflects a little, will pretend to say that so many thousands of spiritualists—among whom are numbers of men and women noted for their intelligence and honesty—no one, I say, will pretend that all these are only playing tricks upon one another. Tell me, in the name of sound reason, what object could all these fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, friends and relatives, have in thus deceiving one another, and

pretending to have communications from spirits, if they really have none? Those who can swallow such an absurdity, are certainly far more weak-minded and credulous than those who believe in the reality of spirit manifestations.

It is certain that there is often a great deal of jugglery and trickery in these so called spirit manifestations. It is also certain that there is much that can be explained on natural principles. There is much that proceeds from the morbid or abnormal affections of human nature, from imagination or hallucination; but, admitting all this, there still remains a great deal that can be explained only by admitting the interference of *superhuman* and *intelligent* powers. Some try to explain the phenomena of spiritualism by attributing them all to animal magnetism, or to a force which they call "od," or "odyllic" force. But what "odyllic" force means, they are unable to say; and so, with this newly-coined word, they only seek to cover their ignorance.

Spiritualists pretend that these phenomena are produced by departed spirits; but of this they have no other proof than the assertion of the spirits themselves. Now, according to the testimony of all spiritualists, many, I might say *all*, of these spirits are liars, and consequently their assertions cannot be credited. The truth is, we cannot conclude any thing certain from these phenomena without the aid of revelation. I do not pretend to say that *all* science is necessarily based on faith, but I *do* say that, without the light of revelation, we cannot have a full knowledge of the various phenomena of the universe, or explain the various facts of history. If I did not know, from revelation, that the devil and his angels exist, I might observe, and be convinced of, the various

manifestations of spiritualism, and yet I could not trace them with certainty to their true source; they would remain to me inexplicable. But, knowing from revelation that even the very air swarms with evil spirits—the enemies of God and man—I can see at once the natural explanation of the spirit manifestations, and trace them to their proper source. This source is no other than hell. With Father Bonaventure, I boldly assert that “modern spiritualism is nothing but Satanism.” The proofs for the truth of this assertion, I take :

1. From the holiness of God and his angels.
2. From the answers of the spirits themselves.
3. From the character of those spirit manifestations and visitations.
4. From the behavior of the spirits when in the presence of some supernatural power.
5. From the principles and morals of the spiritualists.
6. From the baneful consequences of spiritualism.
7. From Holy Scripture and the Church.

As to the origin of these spirit-manifestations, I say they cannot come from God, or his holy angels or saints. God and his angels and saints are too holy and too sublime beings to amuse vain men with such frivolous entertainment. Good and holy spirits hate what God hates; they will never do any thing that is an abomination in the sight of God. The spirit-manifestations must, then, proceed from evil spirits, from Satan and his associates.

The answers of these spirits are such that they betray, at once, their author. “Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, O wicked servant!” (Luke xix., 22.) The spiritualists themselves assert that the spirits, from whom they receive communications, often speak ambiguously; that

they do not always tell the truth, but that, in many instances, they have told palpable lies. Now does not this betray their satanic character? To tell a lie is a sin. But holy spirits, cannot sin any more. These lying spirits, then, are evil spirits. Satan is a liar, and the father of lies. He is the inveterate enemy of truth, and if he sometimes tells it, it is because he is compelled by a higher power; or if, now and then, of his own accord, it is only because truth serves his purpose of deception better than falsehood.

The predictions of God are clear and precise, for, with God, the future is ever present. But Satan is a creature, and his power and intelligence, though superhuman, are yet limited. The universe has many secrets which he cannot penetrate. The devil can never tell the future with certainty; he can only guess at it, like a shrewd observer, judging from his knowledge of the present and the past. Hence it is, the oracles of Satan are always ambiguous and stammering, and calculated to deceive; in most instances, they turn out to be falsehoods. Now the holy, good spirits never speak ambiguously, or in a manner calculated to deceive; they never tell lies, for they can sin no more. It is, then, evident that those lying spirits, with whom spiritualists communicate, must be evil spirits.

The visitations or communications of God, or of His angels, bring peace and holy joy; while the communications or visitations of the devil, on the contrary, bring trouble and discord

When the Lord comes in his gracious visitations, all is sweetness and peace. No disturbance of the physical system, no whirling and howling, no storm and tempest,

no wringing and twisting of the arms and legs, no violent and indecent postures, no abnormal developement or exercise of the faculties, mark the incoming of the Holy Ghost. All is calm and serene. The understanding is illuminated, the heart is warmed, the will is strengthened, and the whole soul is elevated by the infusion of a supernatural grace. There is no crisis, no forgetfulness, or awaking from a trance.

But whenever it is the reverse, as is the case in spiritism—whenever we see violence, distortion, quaking, trembling, and disturbance—these are so many indications of the presence of the evil spirit, which delights in violence and disorder, and which displays power without love, force without goodness, knowledge without gentleness.

Besides, it is a well-attested fact, that many of the so-called spirit-mediums understand Greek, Latin, Spanish, and French, when they have no knowledge of any language but their own; and that often there have been speaking and writing in foreign languages by those who were unacquainted with any. Some of them see and tell things passing in distant places, and exhibit a superior physical strength.

A daughter of Judge Edmonds, a celebrated spiritualist, when about eight or ten years old, wrote, in a trance, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin. Mr. Hume, in England, some time ago, carried fire in his hands, lengthened his arms, flew up in the air, and was shining bright sometimes.

Facts like these evidently betray a diabolical agent, and even satanic possession; for they are precisely the same as those laid down by the Catholic Church for the guidance of exorcists in cases of supposed demoniac invasion or possession.

The good angels do all in their power to promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth. They remind us of the gospel truths, and encourage us to live up to them: whilst those spirits with whom spiritualists hold intercourse, make most strenuous efforts to destroy Christianity. Jesus Christ triumphed over the devil by his death on the cross; he broke his power. Hence it is that Satan bears an implacable hatred to Jesus Christ and his religion. What wonder, then, if we find that he is always engaged in undermining Christianity, and destroying all belief in it.

The doctrines which these spirits teach, and confirm with lying wonders, are evidently what St. Paul calls "the doctrines of the devils." These lying spirits all unite in denying the existence of hell and of devils. They also deny the resurrection of the body; they give a false idea of God; they assert that Christianity has had its day, and that they have come to announce a new and more sublime form of religion—a religion which shall free the world from the Old Church, from bondage to the Bible, from creeds and dogmas—a religion which shall free mankind from the laws of social and political life, and shall place the religious and political world on a higher basis, and infuse into it a more energetic spirit of progress. Such is the high-sounding boast of spiritualism and its infernal agents. In the eyes of its deluded followers, spiritualism is destined to carry on and complete the work which was begun by Jesus Christ, and which, as they blasphemously assert, was left unfinished.

The morals and principles taught by these lying spirits are as bad as can be imagined; and, in fact, the lives led by some of the more advanced spiritualists are most immoral and revolting. The spirits, it is true, give, now

and then, some good advice: they sometimes tell the truth; for, as the Apostle assures us, the devil sometimes "puts on the semblance of an angel of light." But he does this only to gain credit and to secure the confidence of his deluded followers. He sometimes tells the truth, but it is always blended or followed by falsehood. He sometimes gives good advice, but, at the same time, he takes away all moral restraints. The evil spirit may sometimes advise persons to become Catholics, but it is only that they may receive the sacraments unworthily, and thus become hardened in sin, and incapable of returning to the truth, and that thus he may acquire more power over them. After some time, he always advises them to leave the Catholic Church. We have numerous instances of this.

Dr. Nichols, from Philadelphia, and Mr. Hume, were told by the devil to become Catholics; and, after some time, the devil said to them, "Now leave the Catholic Church, and ascend higher."

These lying spirits war against all authority in faith and morals, as being repugnant to the rights of reason; as being repugnant to the sentiments of the heart. They assert that all should seek and do what is right, but that no one should be constrained. The affections and passions should be free as the air we breathe, and to restrain them they war against all authority in social and domestic life, say these lying spirits, is to war against nature herself. These hellish spirits often speak to their deluded followers of love, but the love which they preach is not the love of God. No! it is only sexual love; base, animal passion! Hence the spiritualists very generally look upon the marriage law as tyrannical and absurd, and assert the doctrines

of free love. They hold that sexual love is the essence of marriage, and that, when that love ceases, the marriage is dissolved. They, therefore, consider it immoral for a husband and wife to live together, after they have ceased to love each other. It is easy to see to what such a doctrine leads, and we are not at all surprised to find that conjugal fidelity is not considered a virtue by the greater part of spiritualists. The spiritualist husband may leave his wife, and the spiritualist wife may leave her husband, and choose a new "affinity" as often as they please. At the Spiritualist Convention, held some years ago (June, 1858) at Rutland, Vt., the following resolution was presented and defended:

Resolved, That the only true and natural marriage is an exclusive conjugal love between one man and one woman."

According to this theory, the essence of marriage is "exclusive conjugal love." Consequently, the bond of marriage is dissolved as soon as this conjugal love ceases, and a man or woman may marry as often as his or her conjugal love becomes "exclusive" for any particular individual.

A similar resolution was presented at the National Spiritualist Convention, held in Chicago, August 9, 1864. It was offered by Dr. A. G. Parker of Boston, Chairman of Committee on Social Relations.

At the famous Rutland Convention, a certain Miss Julia Branch, of New York, said, as reported in the "Banner of Light," July 10, 1858, that she must demand her freedom; she must demand her right to receive equal wages with man in payment for her labor, and her right to have children when she will and by whom she will.

We might quote much more, still more startling; we

might give an account of the spiritualist community at Berlin, Ohio; but we do not wish to disgust our respected readers. What we have said concerning the doctrines and morals of spiritualists, is enough to prove to all that spiritualism is of satanic origin. "By their fruits you shall know them."

Let us see now how these familiar spirits of the spiritualists behave when in the presence of an opposing power. Such an opposing power, for instance, is a simple *prayer* from a Catholic priest, or even from a good Catholic layman.

I know a certain priest, who, one day, went to such a meeting with the intention of preventing the diabolical performances. He adjured the evil spirits not to exercise any influence, neither over their mediums, nor over any of those present at the meeting. What happened? It was in vain that the medium tried to make the spirits appear and speak. He told the assembly that the spirits would not come, that there must be some opposing power.

One day, the Earl of Fingall, in Ireland, Lord Plunkett, father of Rev. Father Plunkett, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, happened to be at a meeting of spiritualists. The tables began to move. He became frightened, because he saw there was something preternatural in it. So he retired to a corner, and began to pray (to say the Rosary), and instantly the operations were stopped, and they could not get along any more, as long as he was there. (*Related by Father Plunkett to one of our Fathers.*)

The familiar spirits of spirit-mediums find an opposing power in the presence of *sacred relics*.

The Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate, was most

foolishly superstitious, and exceedingly fond of soothsayers and magicians (or spiritualists), Maximius, the Magician (or spiritualist), and others of that character, were his chief confidants. He endeavored, by the black art, or by means of the devil, to rival the miracles of Christ, though he effected nothing.

At that time there was, at Daphne, five miles from Antioch, a famous idol of Apollo, which uttered oracles in that place. Gallus Cæsar, to oppose the worship of that idol, translated from Antioch to Daphne the sacred relics of St. Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, and Martyr. He erected a church, sacred to the name of St. Babylas, near the profane temple (or devil's temple), and placed in it the venerable relics of the martyr, in a shrine above ground. The neighborhood of the martyr's relics struck the devil dumb. Eleven years after, in the year 362, Julian the Apostate came to Antioch, and, by a multitude of sacrifices, endeavored to learn of the idol the cause of his silence. At length the fiend gave him to understand that the neighborhood was full of dead bones, which must be removed before he could be at rest, and disposed to give answers. Julian understood this of the body of St. Babylas, and commanded that the christians should immediately remove his shrine to some distant place, but not touch the other dead bodies. The christians obeyed the order, and, with great solemnity, carried in procession the sacred relics back to Antioch, singing, on this occasion, the psalms which ridicule the vanity and feebleness of idols, repeating after every verse: "May they who adore idols and glory in false gods blush with shame, and be covered with confusion." The following evening lightning fell on the Temple of Apollo, and reduced to ashes

the idol and all its ornaments.—(*Butlers Lives of the Saints*, vol. i., pp. 107 and 112, note.)

Holy water, too, or any thing else blessed by the Church, is an opposing power for these spirits.

While some of our Fathers were giving a Mission in Erie, a meeting of spiritualists was held in that city. When the bishop heard of it, he sent one of our Fathers to prevent the evil spirits from exercising their influence over their mediums. The Father went in disguise to the house where the meeting was to take place. He took with him a bottle of *holy water*. Before the performance began, the Father sprinkled the whole floor with holy water. The medium, a young woman, came on the stage, to get into a trance, but she could not succeed. They tried for about an hour, but got no answer. At last the performer, the medium, said: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have to give up to-night. There must be some opposing power, as the spirits do not appear and speak."

When General Lamoricière, Commander of the Pope's Army, and a very pious Catholic, came back from Italy, he happened to be present at a meeting of spiritualists. He held in his hand a little crucifix, blessed by our Holy Father the Pope. Now, when they laid their hands on the table, and invoked the spirits, none of the spirits would come and answer. The *medium* then came and said: "Gentlemen, there is some one among you who is averse to the spirits." He examined the hands of every one, and found the little crucifix in the hand of General Lamoricière. He then told the general either to give up this article or to leave. The general left, the opposing power was gone, and the spirits could work through their medium.

Even the simple *Sign of the Cross* is an opposing power.

One day, as St Gregory Thaumaturgus (worker of wonders) was returning from the city of Neocæsarea to the wilderness, a violent rain obliged him to take shelter in a heathenish temple, the most famous in the country, on account of oracles and divinations delivered there. At his entrance, he made the sign of the cross several times, to purify the air from the evil spirits, and then passed the night there with his companion in prayer, according to custom. The next morning he pursued his journey, and the idolatrous priest performed his usual superstitions in the temple; but the devils declared they could stay there no longer, being forced away by the man who had passed the night there. After several vain attempts to bring those powers back, the priest hastened after the saint, threatening to carry his complaints against him to the magistrates and to the Emperor. Gregory, without the least emotion, told him that, with the help of God, he could drive away or call the devils when he pleased. When the idolater saw that Gregory disregarded all his menaces, and when he heard that the saint had the power of commanding demons at pleasure, his fury was turned into admiration, and he entreated the bishop, as a further evidence of the divine authority, to bring the demons back again to the temple. The saint complied with his request, and dismissed him with a scrap of paper on which he had written, "Gregory to Satan : Enter." This being laid upon the altar, and the usual oblation made, the demons gave their answers as usual. The priest, surprised at what he saw, went after the holy bishop, and begged he would give him some account of that God whom his gods so readily obeyed. After being instructed in the

principles of our holy religion, he renounced his devilish practices, and became a christian. (*Butler's Lives of the Saints, vol. iv., p. 356.*)

Some time ago the Davenport brothers put up a blasphemous placard all over the city of St. Louis, Mo., informing the public that they could perform miracles similar to those of Christ. A certain priest of the city read this placard, and became quite indignant at it. He determined to expose the authors of the placard. So he went, in disguise, to the meeting. Now, when they were about to perform their lying miracles, they put out the lights, and told all present to join hands and form a circle. The priest said to his neighbor: "I will not join hands with you; I wish to find out whether the joining of hands is necessary to the performance." As soon as the lights were put out, they heard music over their heads.

All went on very well. The priest saw that the circle was not necessary to the performance; that it was nothing but a cheat to make the affair mysterious. Having found this out, the priest made the sign of the cross. Instantly there was heard a shriek, and a crash. The lights were lit. Davenport came and said: "Gentlemen, some one of you must have broken the circle; please join hands once more, and do not break the circle." The lights were then put out again. The priest did not join hands with his neighbor, yet the performance again went on as well as before. The priest again made the sign of the cross, and again there was heard a shriek and a crash. Davenport came down and complained. The priest's neighbor then cried out: "My neighbor here did not join hands with me." Every one shouted: "Put him out! Put him out!" and Davenport, too, begged him to leave. But the priest,

who was a strong man, said: "I will not leave until the performance is over. You will have some trouble and difficulty in putting me out; I have paid for my ticket, and I have as much right to stay as any one else."

They could no longer succeed in the performance of their lying wonders. Every one left; the priest stayed until all were gone. Davenport complained to him, saying: "Why did you act thus, and stop our proceedings?" "Well!" said the priest, "do you know who I am? I am a Catholic priest. I suppose you never had a Catholic priest in any of your circles. As you blasphemed God by your placard, I will expose you in all the newspapers of the city. A simple sign of the cross, which I made, was more powerful than all your evil spirits. Had they any power, they would have told you what was the opposing power." Davenport left the city next day.—(*St. Louis Guardian.*)

Now every Christian knows that *good* angels or spirits are not afraid of, nor are driven away by prayer, by holy relics, by the sign of the cross, by holy water, or the like. It is only the devil who fears the power of prayer, and trembles in the presence of sacred objects, because he finds in them the power of Jesus Christ. It is, then, evident from these facts that spiritism is nothing but satanism.

Holy Scripture tells us that Spiritualism is an abomination in the sight of God. Holy Scripture, it is true, does not use the word Spiritualism or Spiritism, but it uses another word which has the same meaning. Holy Scripture forbids necromancy, or the evocation of the dead, and commands that necromancers shall be put to death.

Now our modern Spiritualists openly assert that they

hold intercourse with the spirits of the departed. They are, then, real necromancers, real diviners, attempting, by means of evoking the dead, to divine secrets, whether of the past or the future, unknown to the living. They practise what the world has always called divination, and that species of divination called necromancy. Thus far all is plain, certain, undeniable; and therefore they do that which the Christian world has always held to be unlawful and a dealing with the devils.

Modern Spiritualism is but a revival of the old heathen idol-worship.

Satan is constantly engaged in doing all in his power to entice men away from God, and to have himself worshipped instead of the Creator. The introduction, establishment, persistence and power, of the various cruel, filthy, and revolting superstitions of the ancient heathen world, or of pagan nations in modern times, are nothing but the work of the devil. They reveal a more than human power. God permitted Satan to operate upon man's morbid nature, as a deserved punishment upon the Gentiles for their hatred of truth, and their apostacy from the primitive religion. Men left to themselves, to human nature alone, however low they might be prone to descend, never could descend so low as to worship wood and stone, four-footed beasts and creeping things. To do this needs satanic delusion.

Paganism in its old form was doomed. Christianity had silenced the oracles, and driven the devils back to hell. How was the devil to reestablish his worship on earth, and carry on his war against the Son of God, and the religion which he taught us? Evidently only by changing his tactics and turning the truth into a lie.

He found men in all the heresiarchs, who, like Eve, gave ear to his suggestions, and believed him more than the Infallible Word of Jesus Christ. Thus he has succeeded in banishing the true religion from whole countries, or in mixing it with false doctrines. He has prevailed upon thousands to believe the doctrine of vain, self-conceited men, rather than the religion taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It is by heresies, revolutions, bad, secret societies, and godless State-school education, that he has succeeded so far as to bring thousands of men back to a state of heathenism and infidelity. The time has come for him to introduce idolatry or his own worship. To do this he makes use of spiritualism. Through the spirit-mediums he performs lying wonders. He gives pretended revelations from the spirit world, in order to destroy or weaken all faith in divine revelation. He thus strives to re-establish in Christian lands that very same devil-worship which has so long existed among heathen nations, and which our Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy. The Holy Scriptures assure us that all the gods of the heathens are devils. ("Omnes dii gentium dæmonia."—Ps.) These demons took possession of the idols made of wood or stone, of gold or silver; they had temples erected in their honor: they had their sacrifices, their priests and their priestesses. They uttered oracles. They were consulted through their mediums in all affairs of importance, and especially in order to find out the future, precisely as they are consulted by our modern Spiritualists at the present day.

In modern Spiritualism the devil communicates with men by means of tables, chairs, tablets, planchette, or by rapping, writing, seeing and speaking mediums. It is all

the same to the devil whether he communicates with men and leads them astray by means of idols, or by means of tables, chairs, planchette, and the like.

Upon this sort of dealing with the devil, the Lord has pronounced both temporal and eternal woe. In the book of Deuteronomy, chap. xviii., verses 10–12, we read: "Let there not be found among you," says the Lord, "any one that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens; neither let there be any wizard nor charmer, nor *any one that consulteth pythonic spirits*, or fortune-tellers, or that *seeketh the truth from the dead*, for the Lord abhorreth all these things." "The soul that shall do these things," says the Lord, "I shall set my face against that soul, and destroy it out of the midst of its people."—(Leviticus, xix., 20.)

In the same book of Leviticus, chap. xx., 27., we read: "A man or woman that hath a *familiar spirit*, or is a wizard, dying, let him die; they shall stone them, and their blood shall be upon them." St. John tells us that such people shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone.—(Apoc., xxi., 8.)

That God has severely punished those who hold dealings and communications with the devil, we find recorded in Holy scriptures.

King Saul was slain in battle because he had recourse to a witch, *i. e.*, a spirit-medium.

Holy Scripture also tells how King Achab consulted the false prophets, or spirit-mediums, and how God gave power to the devil to deceive these mediums, and tell falsehoods to the King. Achab believed them, and God punished him; for, soon after, the King perished in battle.

The same kind of death was inflicted upon the Emperor

Julian, who was so fond of consulting the devil by his mediums.

In our own day we see similar punishments inflicted upon those who practise spiritualism, and even on those who take but a slight part in it.

I know a certain doctor who assisted sometimes, out of curiosity, at these diabolical circles of Spiritualists. When he came to understand that it was sinful to assist at such meetings even from a spirit of curiosity, he never went again; but he was punished for having entered the house of the devil. He came to me, and told me how he was harassed and tormented every night by evil spirits, that they made a horrible noise in his room, and prevented him from sleeping.

“I would not care for the noise,” said he, “provided I could sleep, but I have not slept for several weeks, and I am so nervous and excited that I cannot possibly bear it; I shall become insane if it continues so any longer. Please, Father, help me if you can.”

I told him to kneel down, and I recited over him the prayers prescribed by the Catholic Church for such persons. The evil spirits left him quiet for about a month, when they began again to disturb him during the night. The doctor, came again to me, that I might pray over him. I did so; and the evil spirits retired again. This happened about four years ago. Last summer I saw the doctor, and asked him whether the evil spirits had left him alone. He said: “Yes; I have not suffered any more from them since I saw you last.”

This is an instance of but a slight punishment; but there are on record instances of far severer punishments. Experience teaches that those who practise Spiritualism

often turn insane in the end, and become perfect maniacs.

You have, probably, read of many such cases of insanity in the newspapers. The *Boston Pilot* writes, Jan. 1, 1852: "Most mediums become misanthropical, idiotic or insane. The same happens even to many of the auditors. Experience teaches that, almost every week, one of these unfortunate persons commits suicide, or is locked up in a mad-house. Many of these mediums betray evident signs of mental derangement, and even sometimes not less evident marks of satanic possession."

The *Courier and Inquirer* writes, May 10, 1852, that, in the month of April, in Indiana, six persons were taken to the insane asylum in consequence of the intercourse which they had held with spirit rappers.

The *Herald* mentions, under date of April 30, 1852, that Mr. Junius Alcott, of Utica, committed suicide in a fit of insanity brought on by the same cause.

In Paris, in the same year, many persons, while taking part in table rapping, suddenly became insane, and found their way to the mad-house in Bicetre and Charenton, and others were taken to private insane institutions.

Madame Victoria d'Hennequin also died insane. Her husband, too, died a maniac; he had discharged the office of secretary to the spirit of the earth, which communicated with him through the medium of a small table. Not long ago a certain person of Pittsburg, and some others of Philadelphia, who made frequent use of the planchette, became insane, and were put in the insane asylum.

Another famous Spiritualist, of Philadelphia, committed suicide because the spirit told him to do so.

It would take me too long to adduce more instances of this kind, to show how the votaries of spiritualism are

punished even in this life. What I have said on Spiritualism, should be sufficient to convince every sincere mind that the Catholic Church is right in condemning as unlawful the practice of spiritualism.

In the admirable book of the Council of Baltimore—lately published—in which it is enjoined on *all*, Bishops, Priests, and Laity, to observe strictly, after a brief exposition of the rogueries of Magnetism, Clairvoyance and Spiritism, as partly foolery and partly an open door to deviltry, the Fathers of the Council, as approved at Rome, conclude by saying :

“It is a great solace to us that our children, beloved in Christ, the Catholic faithful, have not, thus far, been infected with this plague. And we exhort them, in the Lord, that they never give countenance to Spiritism, even in the most casual manner ; and that they do not, through any curiosity, ever be present at its ‘circles.’ For they who enter the house of the devil, have all reason to fear that they will be deluded by his devices, and enslaved to his command. Against the vile snares of these people, the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Ghost, spoke in prophecy of these last days of the world : the Spirit speaketh, openly, that in the *last days* some will fall from the Faith, adhering to *spirits of error*, and to doctrines of devils, in hypocrisy speaking falsehood, and having their conscience scarred.”—*Tit. I.*, p. 33.

The claims of Spiritualism are very high, but there is abundant proof to show that, instead of being “ancient Christianity revived,” it is, perhaps, the worst enemy that Christianity ever had to meet. It is Satan’s last grand effort to substitute his own infernal worship for the worship of God. The snares of the devil are cunningly

laid. Thousands and millions are already his deluded victims. Occasionally we hear a warning voice from one who has escaped from his power, like a mariner from the sinking wreck; but the greater part of Satan's deluded followers, after they have been once initiated into the Spiritualist "circle," are like boatmen in the midst of a terrible whirlpool—their destruction is inevitable!

Mr. J. F. Whitney, editor of the "New York Pathfinder," was formerly a warm advocate of Spiritualism, and published much in its favor. Hear what he says:

"Now after long and constant watchfulness, after seeing for months and years the progress and practical workings of Spiritualism upon the devotees and its mediums, we are compelled to speak our honest conviction, that the manifestations coming through the acknowledged mediums, whether rapping, tipping, writing, or entranced mediums, have a baneful influence upon its followers, and create discord and confusion. The generality of their teachings inculcates false ideas, and upholds principles and theories which, when carried out, debase men and make them little better than the brute. . . .

"We have seen the gradual progress it makes with its believers, and particularly its mediums, from morality to sensuality and immorality. We have seen it gradually undermining the foundation of good principles—we have noticed with amazement the radical change which a few months will bring about in individuals." "We desire," he says in conclusion, "to send forth our warning voice; and if our position as head of a public journal, our known advocacy of Spiritualism, our experience, and the conspicuous part we have played among its believers, the honesty and fearlessness with which we have defended

the subject, will weigh anything in our favor, we desire that our opinions may be received; we desire that those who are moving passively down the rushing rapids to destruction, should pause—ere it be too late—and save themselves from the blasting influence which these manifestations are causing.”

Under the description of necromancy or spiritism comes *Animal Magnetism*, or *Mesmerism*.

“Animal magnetism, or mesmerism,” as it is commonly called, is a theoretical agent of a peculiar nature, and is supposed to be capable of producing the most powerful effects, in some mysterious way, on the human body. This so-called science is of recent discovery. Its inventor was Anton Mesmer, who studied physics at Vienna, and took his degree of doctor of medicine in the university of that place, in the year 1776. Whilst at Vienna he became acquainted with a Jesuit, Father Hehl, who had great faith in the influence of the loadstone on human diseases, and had invented steel plates of a peculiar form, which he impregnated with the virtues of a magnet, and applied to the cure of diseases. From him Mesmer learned the art of using the magnet in the cure of diseases; and having left Vienna, and travelled for some time in different parts of Germany and Switzerland, continuing everywhere to work wonderful cures, he at last set out for Paris, where he arrived in the year 1778. Here his success in curing patients was very great, and a society was actually formed for purchasing his secret.

Mesmer and his followers on the Continent, and most of those who have practised *mesmerism* in these countries, have produced its effect by placing themselves near the individual to be *mesmerised*, and making downward passes

with their hands over him, without touching him, but looking him at the same time intently in the face. This is said to affect the individual in a space of time varying from two or three minutes to half an hour. However, Mr. Braid, a surgeon, residing in Manchester, in the course of his inquiries, found that a second individual was not necessary to the successful development of mesmeric phenomena, and that by causing a person to sit still and simply directing his attention, by means of the eyesight, to some particular object, all the effects of the passes and of the intense looking of the operator could be produced. Many theories have been propounded in order to explain the facts of animal magnetism.

Mesmer and his immediate followers attributed them to the action of a subtle fluid in the bodies of animals, which enables them to exercise an influence on another at a distance, just as a magnet affects iron; hence he called it *animal magnetism*. This hypothesis of a nervous fluid susceptible of being influenced, and producing an influence more or less modified, has been adopted by most writers on *mesmerism*, till the appearance of the experiments made by Surgeon Braid. The mesmeric state having been produced by Mr. Braid, it is said, without any influence from a second person, he accounts for the phenomena by supposing there is "a derangement of the cerebro-spinal centres and of the circulatory and respiratory and muscular systems, induced by a fixed state, absolute repose of the body, fixed attention, and suppressed respiration, concomitant with the fixity of attention." He further adds, that in all cases he believes "that the whole depended on the physical and psychical condition of the patient arising from the causes referred to, and not at all on the

volition or passes of the operator throwing out a magnetic fluid, or exciting into activity some mystical universal fluid or medium."

The effects of the *passes* or fixed attention, on persons of nervous susceptibility, are various. There are different stages or degrees in reference to the effects produced by *mesmerism*. The person mesmerised completely has his eyes closed and his senses lulled, and yet he speaks and acts—he answers the questions proposed him, and manifests an intelligence and knowledge of which before he gave no proofs; and no sooner has he got out of that mesmeric trance or state, than the knowledge displayed previously at once departs.

To what, though, are we to attribute this strange state effected by *mesmerism*? Are we to consider it as a natural result of the process applied, or are we to attribute it to the intervention of demons?

To this question we simply answer that, whatever animal magnetism or mesmerism may have been in its origin, it has since been allied to superstition and licentiousness to such an extent that it has been condemned by the Holy See, and has been forbidden as a culpable and dangerous abuse. (Encyc. of the Holy Office, Aug. 4, 1856.)

In regard to magnetism, Catherine Emmerich says: "My impression with regard to magnetism has always been one of horror. Magnetism borders on magic. Indeed, it is true, the devil is not invoked, but he comes of his own accord. Whoever practises mesmerism plucks from nature something that can be lawfully won only in the Church of Jesus Christ, and that preserves its power of healing and sanctifying only in her bosom. For all

such as are not intimately united with Jesus Christ by true faith and by sanctifying grace, nature is full of satanic influences.

“Magnetic persons see nothing in its essence and in its relation to God. They see each thing singly and unconnected, as if they saw it through a hole or cranny. Through magnetism they receive a single ray of light, and would to God that ray were pure and holy!

“It is a blessing of God that he has separated and veiled us from one another and has placed walls of clay between us. We are so full of sin, and each one has his own peculiar sins, so that it is a mercy that we must first act before we can influence our neighbor by our wickedness and communicate it to him.

“In Jesus Christ alone, as our Head, we can become one, purified from our sins, and sanctified. Whoever breaks down this wall of separation in any other way, unites himself in a most dangerous manner with fallen nature, in which he reigns who brought nature to its fall.

“Magnetism is essentially true, but in its hidden light there is a thief loosed from his chain! Every union among sinners is dangerous; but this clear-sighted penetration is still more dangerous. When a soul whose interior is entirely open, falls through magnetism a prey to artifice and intrigue, then one of the faculties man possessed before the fall, and which is not yet quite dead, revives, but only to leave the soul interiorly more unprotected and mystified, and more exposed to the assaults of the demon.

“This state really exists, but it is covered; for it is a spring poisoned for all except the saints.

“The condition of these clairvoyants or magnetized persons runs, in some respects, parallel to mine, but it

moves in another direction, flows from other sources and has other consequences. The sins of persons, in their ordinary state of life, are committed through the senses; the inner light is not thereby darkened, conscience warns, and, like an unseen judge, urges the sinner to acts of contrition and penance, and leads him to the sensible and supernatural remedies of the Church—the holy sacraments.

“The senses are the medium of sin, while the inner light remains the accuser. But when, in the magnetic state, the senses are dead and the inner light receives and produces impressions, then that which is holiest in man, the warning conscience, is exposed to sinful influence and to evil infections, of which the soul loses all consciousness as soon as it returns to its waking state—to the life of the senses; and thus the soul cannot cleanse itself from these sins by the purifying remedies of the Church.

“A soul, quite pure and reconciled with God, cannot be wounded by the devil, even when its inner life is thus open. But if the soul has previously consented to the least temptation, as easily happens, especially in the case of females, then Satan is free to play his game in the interior of the soul, and to dazzle her with the semblance of sanctity. And even should the magnetized person see or learn some way of healing the mortal body, she has to pay dearly for it by secret infection of her immortal soul; for through a certain magic influence, she is often defiled by the sinful dispositions of the magnetizer.

“I saw the state of this magnetized person’s soul, and learned that her visions were not pure and not from God. Though she did not wish to acknowledge it even to herself, she was influenced by sensuality and the desire of pleasing; and secretly loved the magnetizer.

“The passes the magnetizer made before the woman’s eyes, his stroking and his touches, appear to me to be something abominable, for I could see the interior of them both; I could see the inflowing of his nature and his influences into her being. Satan was always present in person, and accompanied every motion of the magnetizer.

“These mediums in their visions are in a sphere entirely different from mine. If they have the least impure stain in them, before the eyes of their soul are open, they see every thing in a false light. The devil dazzles them with alluring images, and paints everything in glowing colors.

“If a medium, before the vision, desires to have something interesting to tell, or if she harbors the least sensual desire, she is in the greatest danger of falling into sin. Many indeed are healed bodily through mesmerism, but the greater part of them leave the magnetizer with their soul in a worse condition than when they came, without knowing where the evil was communicated to them.”

“Vampire” means a blood-sucker, and is said to be a man who returns in body and soul from the other world, and wanders about the earth doing every kind of mischief to the living, generally by sucking their blood when asleep, and thus causing their death. Those who are destroyed in this way, we are told, become themselves vampires. The only way, it is said, of getting rid of such revolting visitors, is, according to Dom Calmet, (*Dissertation sur les Vampires*) to disinter their bodies, to pierce them with a stake cut from a green tree, to cut off their heads, and burn their bodies. The belief in “vampires” has prevailed for many ages in Hungary, Bohemia, Austria, Greece, and all through the East. Of all those countries Hungary may be considered as the principal seat of “vampires,”

and scarcely a century has elapsed since all Europe was filled with reports about the deeds of vampires in Hungary and Servia. The belief became so general in those countries, in the middle of the eighteenth century, that Louis XV. of France commissioned the Duc de Richelieu, his ambassador at Vienna, personally to ascertain in Hungary the reality of vampirism.

In some Hungarian papers, the manner and habits of those vampires are described; as, for instance, that when lying in their graves they suck and chew their winding sheets, and that, therefore, it was necessary to bind their hands, that they might not be able to turn about in their coffins. Many believe that "vampires," notwithstanding all the means used to destroy their bodies, will resume their shape, and recommence their mischievous wanderings as soon as the rays of moonlight fall on their graves. Innumerable stories, more or less wonderful, have been circulated in reference to vampirism; yet, despite the apparent evidence of certain facts, there are very few persons, nowadays, who attach the slightest importance to the accounts circulated about "vampires."

"Whatever has been related of their return to life," says Dom Calmet, "of their appearances, of the alarm and dread which they cause in town and country, and of the death which they inflict by sucking the blood of the living—all this is but a delusion, and the result of an overheated imagination, and of a mind strongly prejudiced. No sane, serious, unprejudiced witness can be cited, who can say that he saw, touched, felt, questioned, or examined such spirits, or who could assure us of the reality of their return to life, and of the effects which are generally attributed to them." It is very likely that the super-

stition about the vampire has derived considerable strength from cases where men, supposed to be dead, have been buried alive. Such cases have happened in many countries, as has been shown by the altered position of the body in the coffin, spots of blood on the torn winding-sheets, bites on the hands, and other marks of the trouble and despair before life became extinct; and it is probable that such signs have been sometimes interpreted as the marks of vampirism.

10. What is astrology?

Astrology assumes to forecast the fate of nations and of individuals, and the changes in the elements, from the aspects of the heavenly bodies.

In common language there are still remaining some faint traces of the once almost universal belief in astrology, as when we speak of being *born under a lucky star*, and of *blessing our stars*.

What possible connection can there be between the stars and the destinies of men? St. Augustine proves by a story of his own day how ridiculous the notion is that stars can exercise a particular influence on the destiny of a person.

The circumstance occurred to one of his friends, named Firminius, who related it to him in these terms: "My father was so superstitious, that, some time before I came into the world he consulted the stars in order to read my fortune. He had a friend who was addicted to astrology no less than himself; this friend likewise consulted the stars for one of his domestics, who was on the point of giving birth to a child. They agreed together that one should send a messenger to the other to apprise him of the day and hour on which the respective births should take place. By a singular chance, the messengers set out at the same

moment from the two houses, and met midway on the road, which proves that the two children were born exactly at the same time. Well ! behold the folly of fortune-tellers : my father pretended to have read in the stars that I was to be a great genius, and all my life through, a favorite of fortune. His friend, who had been observing the heavens at the same moment, and who, consequently, should have seen just what he did, assured him that he saw quite the contrary, an evident proof that there is nothing more ridiculous, more absurd, than observations of this kind."—D. GENEVAUX, *Histoires choisies*, p. 436.

When the Greek Emperor, Comenus, was very ill, the Patriarch, Theodosius, earnestly exhorted him not to lose time in settling the affairs of his kingdom, and making arrangements about his youngest son, Alexius. But the emperor answered that he had been assured he would live fourteen years more, and that his informant was one whose word could not be questioned, as he was an astrologer. As his malady appeared not to abate, but rather increased from day to day, he gave up all hope of living much longer, settled his affairs as well as he could, detested and bewailed his superstition, and died a short time after.

11. What is witchcraft ?

Witchcraft is to try, with the help of the devil, to injure others in their person or property.

Witchcraft consists in trying, by the help of the devil, to injure others ; to bewitch them, make them fall into diseases or into poverty ; to torment them with pains ; to hurt their cattle, to excite them to impure love, to inspire them with hatred to certain persons and the like. To do anything of the kind is a great abomination, in the

sight of God, and a most grievous sin against charity and justice. The idolatrous parents of St. Cyprian, surnamed the magician, were given up to all kinds of superstition. They devoted their son from his infancy to the devil. They brought him up in all kinds of impious practices of superstition. They sent him to Athens, Mount Olympus, Macedon, Argos, Phrygia, Memphis in Egypt, Chaldea, and the Indies, in order that, in these places so famous for superstition and the black art, he might make great discoveries in these infernal, pretended sciences.

When Cyprian was imbued with all the extravagances of devilish delusion, he no longer hesitated to commit any kind of crime. He blasphemed Christ, and committed secret murders of children, in order to offer their blood and inspect their bowels, and thus learn future events. He employed his infernal skill against the modesty of virgins; but he found Christian women proof against his assaults and spells.

There lived at Antioch a young woman called Justina. Her nobility and beauty drew all eyes upon her. She was born of heathen parents, but was converted to the Catholic faith. Her conversion was followed by that of her parents.

Now it happened that a young nobleman, a pagan, fell deeply in love with her, and finding her modesty inaccessible, and her resolution invincible, he applied to Cyprian for the assistance of his black art. Cyprian was no less taken with the young virgin than his friend. He tried all the secrets of black art to conquer her resolutions, and excite her to impure love. When Justina perceived herself vigorously attacked, she armed herself with prayer, watchfulness and mortification against all his artifices and the power of his spells. "She defeated and put to flight the devils by the sign of the holy cross," says Photius.

When Cyprian found himself worsted by a superior power, he began to consider the weakness of the hellish spirits, and resolved to give up their service. The devil was enraged at the loss of one by whom he had gained so many souls. To avenge himself on Cyprian, he assailed him with the utmost fury ; he filled his soul with a deep melancholy, and brought him near the brink of despair by showing to him the enormity of his past crimes.

In this great perplexity of mind, he felt inspired by the grace of God to go and see a holy priest, named Eusebius, who had been his school-fellow. By the advice of this priest, he was wonderfully comforted and encouraged in his conscience. On the following Sunday, very early in the morning, he was conducted by the priest to the assembly of the Christians. Every one was astonished to see Cyprian introduced by the priest among them. The bishop could hardly believe his own eyes, and be persuaded that Cyprian's conversion was sincere.

But on the day following, Cyprian gave him a proof of his sincerity by burning all his magical books. He, moreover, gave all he possessed to the poor, and joined the Catechumens. When he was sufficiently instructed in the Christian doctrine, he was baptised by the bishop. Agladius, the first suitor to the holy virgin, was likewise converted and baptised. Justina herself was so deeply impressed by these examples of divine mercy, that she cut off her hair, dedicated her virginity to God, and gave all her jewels and other possessions to the poor. After his conversion, Cyprian began to lead a most exemplary life. He edified every one by his humility, modesty, gravity, love of God, contempt of riches, and assiduous application to heavenly things. After he had been door-

keeper and sweeper of the Church for some time, he was promoted to the priesthood, and after the death of Anthimus the bishop, he was made bishop of Antioch. He died, at last, a martyr under the persecution of the emperor Diocletian.

12. What is sorcery ?

Sorcery is to try, with the help of the devil, to do wonderful things.

St. Luke relates, in the Acts of the Apostles, (chap. viii.), that a certain man, named Simon the Magician, had acquired a great reputation in the city of Samaria. This man seduced the people by his magical practices. He gave out that he was some great one. *All gave ear to him, from the least to the greatest, saying: "This man is the power of God, which is called great."*

The infernal spirit tried to oppose these illusions and artifices to the true miracles of Christ, as he was suffered to assis the magicians of the King Pharaoh against Moses. But God, when He permits the devil to exert in so extraordinary a manner his natural strength and powers, always furnishes His servants with the means of discerning and confounding the imposture.

Accordingly, the clear miracles wrought, at that time, by St. Philip the Deacon, put the magician quite out of countenance. Being himself witness to them, and seeing the people run to Philip, he also believed, or rather pretended to believe, and, being baptized, he adhered to Philip, hoping to attain to the power of effecting miracles like those which he saw him perform. The Apostles of Jerusalem, learning of the conversion of Samaria, sent thither St. Peter and St. John to confirm the converts by

the imposition of hands. With the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation, at that time, were usually conferred certain external gifts of miraculous power. Simon, seeing these communicated to the laity by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles, offered them money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands he may receive the Holy Ghost." But St. Peter said to him: "Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Do penance for this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I see thou art in the gall of bitterness, and engaged in the bonds of iniquity."

Simon, fearing the threat of temporal evils, answered: "Pray for me to the Lord that none of these things may come upon me."

The Fathers of the Church generally look upon the conversion of Simon to the faith as an act of hypocrisy, founded only in ambition and temporal views, and in the hope of purchasing the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he ascribed to a superior magical art.

Simon the Magician, having been confounded in Samaria, went to Rome, where he gained a high reputation. St. Justin, Martyr, Sts. Iræneus, Tertullian, Eusebius, and others, assure us that divine honors were paid to him there. Simon found means to ingratiate himself with Nero, the Roman Emperor; for Nero was, above all other mortals, infatuated with the superstitions of the black art to the last degree of folly and extravagance. To excel in this art was one of his greatest passions, and for this purpose he spared no expense and hesitated about no crimes.

Simon Magus, then, by his vain boastings and illusions could not fail to please the tyrant. The Fathers assure us that this famous magician had promised the Emperor and the people to fly in the air, carried by his angels, thus pretending to imitate the ascension of Christ. Accordingly, he raised himself in the air, by his magical power, in presence of the Emperor.

St. Peter and St. Paul, seeing the delusion, betook themselves to prayer, whereupon the devil lost his power, the imposter fell to the ground, was bruised, and broke a leg; so that he who undertook to fly in the air, was, in a short time after, no longer able to walk on the ground. He died, a few days after, in rage and confusion.— (*Butler's Lives of the Saints, vol. ii., pp. 348, 463, 464.*)

St Augustine tells us in his book, "The City of God," (book xviii., 18.) "that when in Italy, he heard in a certain place of that country, there were women, keepers of inns who, being imbued with the wicked arts, were said to be in the habit of giving to such travellers as they chose, or could manage, something in a piece of cheese by which they were changed on the spot into beasts of burden, and carried whatever was necessary, and were restored to their own form when the work was done. Yet their minds did not become bestial, but remained rational and human.

"Now, if the demons really do such things, they do not create real substances, but only change the appearance of things created by Almighty God so as to make them seem what they are not in reality. I cannot, therefore, believe that even the body, much less the mind, can really be changed into bestial forms and lineaments by any reason, art or power of the demons; but the

phantasm of a man, which even in thought or dreams goes through innumerable changes, may, when the man's senses are asleep or overpowered, be presented to the senses of others in a bodily form, in some indescribable way unknown to me, so that men's bodies themselves may lie somewhere, alive, indeed, yet with their senses much more heavily bound than in sleep, while that phantasm, as it were, embodied in the shape of some animal, may appear to the senses of others and may even seem to the man himself in sleep to be changed, and to bear burdens; and these burdens, if they are real substances, are borne by the demons, that men may be deceived by beholding at the same time the real substance of the burdens and the simulated bodies of the beasts of burden. For a certain man, called Praestantius, used to tell that it happened to his father in his own house, that he took that poison in a piece of cheese, and lay in his bed as if sleeping, yet could by no means be aroused. But he said that after a few days he, as it were, woke up and related the things he had suffered, as if they had been dreams, namely, that he had been made a sumpter horse, and, along with other beasts of burden, had carried provisions for the soldiers of what is called the Rhaetian Legion, because it was sent to Rhaetia. And it was found that all this took place really as he told, but it seemed to him that it was but a dream.

“And another man declared that in his own house at night, before he fell asleep, he saw a certain philosopher whom he knew very well, come to his house and explain to him some things in the Platonic philosophy, which he had previously declined to explain when asked. Now when he asked this philosopher why he came to his house to explain what he had to do at home, he said: ‘I did

not do it, but I dreamed I had done it.' And thus what the one saw when asleep was shown to the other when awake, by a phantasmal image.

"These things have come to us from trustworthy persons whom we could not suppose to be deceiving us. Therefore what men say about the Arcadians being often changed into wolves by the Arcadian gods, or demons rather, if such transformations took place in appearance, they have, in my opinion, happened in the way I have said."

A fact similar to those related by St. Augustine, is related by Goerres. He tells us that a woman, accused of being a werewolf, anointed her body in presence of the magistrate who promised not to kill her if she would give a specimen of her art. Immediately after anointing, she fell on the ground and slept profoundly. After three hours she awoke and told the magistrate that she had been changed into a wolf, and had torn to pieces a sheep and a cow near a village a few miles off, which she named. The magistrate sent to the village and found that the mischief had really been done.

Fortune-telling.—Fortune-tellers are generally gipsies or idle strollers, who go about the country to make their living by imposing on the credulity of ignorant and silly people, persuading them that they can tell them whatever they wish to know, as if God had revealed his secrets to them, or made things of the future known to them.

The means for telling fortunes is sometimes what is called "cutting cards," "reading cups," "a lock of hair;" other times, "the careful scanning of the furrows or creases in the palm of the hand." But very often fortunes are told without having recourse to any external means.

What can be more absurd than to believe that our

fortune can be read in cards, cups, in the palm of the hand, in a lock of hair, and in the like. It is, therefore, the height of folly to consult fortune-tellers, and it is, moreover, a great sin to believe firmly in fortune-telling.

But many will say that they do these things for amusement. But let them remember that what begins in amusement, ends very often in earnest.

There are many persons who began to tell fortunes in play, and became at last convinced that they could, with certainty, tell what would happen by using such means, because they often found that, by the use of these superstitious practices, their predictions came true.

Now this can be easily explained. God allows the devil to be connected with these things, in order to punish the crime of those who use them. "It happens, sometimes," says St. Augustine, "that through the illusions and the deceit of the fallen angels, and through many superstitious means, that several things past and to come are told and foretold, and do not happen otherwise than they are foretold. And when persons find that their observations come to pass, this heightens their curiosity, and entangles them more in the snares of a most pernicious error." (L. ii. de Doct. Christ.)

"Charms and spells" are certain words, sentences, or things, used by superstitious people to procure health for man and beast, to preserve them from some particular evils with which they may be threatened, or to obtain some advantage or other—such as sewing certain things in one's clothes, pronouncing certain words, tying things about some parts of the body, carrying papers about one with certain unknown names and figures written on them, for the purpose of curing, for example, the tooth-ache. To use

sacred things to produce an effect which they have no power to produce, either from nature or God, or from any blessings of the Church, is also detested by God, and forbidden by His holy law. It is superstitious to recite prayers, though good in themselves, in a certain determined number of times, believing by these means that we shall infallibly be preserved from sickness, or that our health will certainly be restored.

Certain verses of Scripture written in a certain figure with other unknown characters, and sewed in one's clothes, as a certain means to ward off sudden death, is also superstitious, and a charm under the cover of piety, introduced by the devil, who can transform himself into an angel of light, in order to deceive and ruin easy and credulous souls. "Philosophize as long as you please upon them," says St. Chrysostom, "and tell me that you call upon God and do nothing else, and that the old woman you make use of is a Christian and Catholic, I tell you it is idolatry and a charm: and no doubt sometimes the devil makes use of the appearances of piety to hide his treachery, and give poison in honey." (Lib. ii. de Doct. Christ. c. 20.)

The great St. Bernard, in his youth, was at one time afflicted with a violent headache, which deprived him of all rest, and which all the remedies prescribed were unable to relieve. Thereupon some of the attendants bethought themselves of a woman, who was reported to have the power of healing diseases by means of certain charms applied to the sick person. They accordingly introduced her into his chamber, but no sooner had the holy youth perceived her intention than he leaped from his bed, and drove her hastily from the room. Having

done so, he again lay down, but this time fell into a refreshing slumber, on awaking from which he found himself entirely cured.—*Life of St. Bernard.*

One day some gypsies met with a young peasant who was herding swine. They told him that they could give him an excellent means to prevent his herd, even in his absence, from scattering and being devoured by wild beasts. These words strongly excited the herdsman's curiosity, for he would be well pleased to be able to go away now and then for a little relaxation. The strangers then showed him a little image of St. Blaise, and told him he had only to fasten that to his stick, and then plant it wherever he wished his swine to remain. The herdsman failed not to make the trial. The first and the second time, having still some doubt as to the efficacy of the plan, he went but a short distance from his herd, and found nothing wrong on his return. Encouraged by this apparent success, and full of confidence in the virtue of his image, he planted his stick again, and went off to join some of his companions two or three miles away. He staid long without any uneasiness; but in the evening when he returned, he found that all his swine had vanished, and no trace of any of them could he find. The adventurers who had discovered to him their famous secret, had counted on his credulity; they had concealed themselves behind the bushes, and profited by the absence of the simple young herdsman to take away his swine.—SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 64.

It is also a superstitious practice to believe that those who carry about them the Rosary or Scapular, or such marks of piety, shall never be damned, or at the hour of death they certainly shall repent and have the benefits

of the sacraments, although they have neglected them all their lives. "The vanity and superstition of those are abominable," says the Council of Cambray, held in the year 1565, "who for certain promise themselves that they shall not depart this life without penance and the sacraments, because they have a devotion to this or that saint; who place a security in the things they carry about them, and think that they shall certainly have the success they desire; and whatever else of this nature is made use of and believed." The devotions of the Rosary and Scapular are undoubtedly good and laudable; and so, too, is the practice of carrying about us relics, or a St John's gospel, the image of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or any of the saints, provided all this be done with a pious attention, without placing in them a certainty of salvation, which is unwarrantable, and not approved by the Church.

The Ark of the Covenant was a great treasure for the Jews. When it was carried around the city of Jericho, the walls of the city fell down; when the Jews had arrived with it at the River Jordan, the waters of the river divided, the lower part flowing off, and the upper part rising like a mountain. Now after the Jews had lost four thousand men in one day, in a war against the Philistines, they had the Ark brought into the camp, hoping that, for its sake, the Lord would protect them, and deliver their enemies into their hands. And the ancients of Israel said: "Why hath the Lord defeated us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch unto us the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from Silo, and let it come in the midst of us, that it may save us from the hands of our enemies. And when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was come into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great joy, and the

earth rang again." (1. Kings, iv.) Now they thought they had no more to fear from their enemies, who, at the sight of the Ark of the Covenant, were panic-stricken; so much so, that they cried out, "God is come into the camp. And sighing they said, Woe to us; who shall deliver us from the hands of these high Gods?"

With new courage the Jews began to fight again. Were they victorious? By no means; they were defeated worse than ever, losing thirty thousand men, besides the the Ark of the Covenant. One might ask here: Did God cease to love the Israelites? Most assuredly not. His love still remained the same as before. Why, then, were they defeated in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, which was given to them as a sign of the Divine blessing and protection? "But for the love of his Ark," says Theodoret, "God did not wish to protect His people, because, after having previously offended Him, they did not repent of their sins. It was with sinful hearts they paid outward honor to the Ark. They shouted with great joy as soon as they beheld it, but there was not one who shed a tear of repentance, no one prayed and sighed with a sorrowful heart. Hence the Ark brought down no blessing upon them at that time."

In like manner, let Catholics wear as many scapulars, Agnus Deis, relics of the saints, gospels of St. John as they please, all these articles of devotion will not save them, if they continue to live in sin.

DREAMS. To give credit to dreams or to allow our actions to be regulated by dreams, by persuading ourselves that from them we know what is to happen, and how our affairs are to succeed, is a very superstitious practice, and strictly forbidden by God. To attach importance to dreams

argues in us folly and silliness as well as impiety. Must not every sane man admit, that dreams and the idle fancies which come into our heads in sleep proceed from the constitution of our bodies—from the humors, indigestions, and the like by which the body is afflicted—from the fumes of what we have been eating and drinking, or from the thoughts which engaged our minds on retiring to sleep. And such being the case, is it not absurd to take them as pointing out what is about to happen to us, or to consider them a rule by which to regulate our acts? This it is that made the wise man say: “Dreams lift up fools. The man that giveth heed to lying visions is like to him that catcheth at a shadow, and followeth after the wind. . . . What truth can come from that which is false? Deceitful divinations and lying omens, and the dreams of evil doers, are vanity . . . for dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them.” (Eccles. xxxiv., 1.) The impious Manasses, King of Juda, was guilty of the superstition of giving credit to dreams, and with this crime and the practice of others like it, he is reproached in Scripture. Giving credit to dreams has been condemned by many councils; and a council held in Paris in the year 820, says that to credit dreams is a relic of paganism.

However, it is not forbidden to give credit to dreams when there are good grounds for thinking that they come from God: for often dreams do come from God. In the Old Law particularly, God was pleased to make known his will to his servants by means of dreams, for in the Old Law he had not so fully revealed the divine truths to mankind as he has done in his Gospel. And so we find mention made in the Old Testament of the dreams of

Jacob, Laban, Joseph, Pharaoh, Nebuchodonozor, Daniel, the three wise men ; and in the New Law we read of the orders of God made known to St. Joseph in a dream. Almighty God, in the book of Numbers says : "If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream." (Num., xii., 6.) And in the book of Samuel, we are told that Saul "consulted the Lord, and he answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by priests nor by prophets." (1 Sam., xxviii., 6.) Historians relate many conversions effected by means of dreams or supernatural visions. Eusebius tells us that Arnobius was often urged in his dreams to examine closely into the Christian religion, for which, up to that time, he entertained no other sentiments than those of hatred and contempt ; and that he did so ; and his prejudices giving way to the light of reason and the proofs of the divinity of the Christian religion, he abjured paganism, and embraced the religion of Jesus.

But it must not be forgotten that, as we see from the examples above, when God makes known his will to men by dreams, they always were either great saints or prophets, or people in a public character ; and that his will was made known to such, not on account of trifling, unimportant matters, but for some great object that had reference to the public good. For, it nowhere appears that he communicated his will by dreams to ordinary mortals, and for objects of every-day occurrence. And fearing that others should be induced to give credit to dreams, God makes an express and general law that no one should give credit to them : "Let there be none among you that observeth dreams . . . for the Lord abhorreth all these things." (Deut., xviii., 10.) But this general prohibition

did not make the servants of God let pass unheeded the manifestations of his will when communicated to them in dreams ; for these dreams were accompanied by such peculiar circumstances, as to prove that they certainly came from God. For the subject proposed in the dreams to the servants of God was invariably good ; the manner in which it was proposed, decent, distinct, and unequivocal ; and peace, humility, fervor, and piety were consequent on those dreams.

There are many who believe that the very contrary of what they dream will certainly take place ; and this notion of dreams is indeed ridiculous and foolish in the extreme. If they dream of gold or silver, they think they will be poor and wretched ; if they have pleasing and happy dreams, they are, they say, to meet with difficulties and trials during the day ; if they dream of a friend that he is happy, he is soon, they imagine, to die. Can there be a greater absurdity than this ?

A variety of other superstitious practices.

It would be almost an endless task to mention all the superstitious practices in use.

It is superstition to believe that I shall have ill-luck if I stumble on the threshold as I go out of the house, or if I put on my right shoe first, or if I meet with a man with one eye, or one that is sick and lame. It is superstition to believe that some misfortune shall befall me if I should meet a magpie on the road, if a hare crosses my path, or if a crow should croak from the house-top. It is also superstition not to begin a journey, or to commence any business upon days that are considered unlucky, and particularly that day of the week on which the feast of Holy Innocents falls that year—not to get married on

Friday, or in May or August, such times supposed to be unlucky. Now, what power have these things to forbode good or bad luck? Surely, none. They have no power of themselves, nor from nature, nor much less any power from God. They have no power, then, at all; and consequently observing these things and regulating our actions accordingly, is no less folly and credulity than sin.

If superstitious people will say that they know from experience that their *observances* of things are not vain but well grounded, such may be the case in their regard, who allow themselves to be influenced by such idle fears, for it may happen that God permits them for their punishment, that through means of the devil these things may have an evil influence. It is, indeed, hard to account for the way in which some people act and speak. There is certainly but one thing that can bring us ill luck or make our affairs go wrong, and that one thing is sin. And yet a great many people have no concern about it; and the very first thing they do in the morning is to call on the devil to take themselves or their families, or to wish bad luck to themselves or their affairs, and yet they have no fear of any evil consequences from their cursing, whilst from some little mistake or foolish occurrence they are terrified, lest some evil come upon them. This is, indeed, strange! Do not the Scriptures tell us, that "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And, "That all things work together for good to them that love God."

It is also superstition to say that it is unlucky to pare one's nails or comb one's hair on Fridays, or wash linen on such days. To present one with a penknife, some will say, is unlucky, for it cuts friendship; if a grave be made on such a day, another will say, a great many will die that

year in the parish ; if we have rain on St. Swithin's day, many will say, we will have rain every day for forty days. To enumerate all the other nonsensical and superstitious remarks that are made every day, would be endless. The observance of lucky and unlucky days is a superstition that is derived from the ancient pagans, and even in the time of the Apostles began to creep in among Christians. It was for this that St. Paul, in writing to the Galatians, says : " You observe days, and months, and years ; I am in fear for you, lest, perhaps, I labored in vain among you." (Gal., iv., 11).

A widow, advanced in years, became one day dangerously ill. Her daughter earnestly implored of her to have the priest sent for that she might receive the last sacraments of the Church ; but she made answer that there was no necessity. The daughter spoke to a friend in the neighborhood on the subject, and asked the person to unite her entreaties with her own, in inducing her mother to have the priest sent for ; but the old woman answered laughing : " Fear not ; I am not going to die yet. The cuckoo has prophesied that I have twelve more years to live." There are some who think that the number of years they will have to live will be in exact proportion to the number of continued notes they have heard from a cuckoo. As she was every day getting worse, the daughter sent for the priest at last. The priest came at once, but when he entered the house the old superstitious woman was without sense or feeling, and remained so until she died.—*Lohn, Bibl.* iii., 559.

St. Chrysostom, in his homily against those that observe new moons, says : " It is the greatest madness to expect that your affairs for the whole year should be

successful, because you began them on such a day. Nay, it is not only madness, but an argument of a strange diabolical impulse, to attribute the prosperity of our life to the occurrence of a certain day, and not to our own care and industry. A day is not lucky or unlucky of its own nature, for one day differs not from another, but it becomes such by our own industry or our sloth. If you employ it in virtue, it will be a lucky day, and merit a reward from God ; if you spend it in wickedness, it will be an unlucky day, and deserves his anger and punishment." Oh, how misguided are many Christians ! They will make no difficulty in marrying contrary to the laws of the Church, which is offensive to God, and which will be the cause of much misery and unhappiness in the marriage state ; and they will not marry in the break of the moon, because the devil suggests that their marriage will be unhappy if they do so. Surely, this manner of acting must be most offensive to God. Regard not, then, good and bad omens, lucky and unlucky days, for these are relics of paganism, and the pomps and snares of the devil. Beware of the devil in all shapes, and never build an assurance of salvation upon any particular form of prayer.

Louis XIII., King of France, was not one of those who shared the silly belief that Friday was an unlucky day. Having fallen dangerously ill, in 1643, Extreme Unction was proposed to him. He wished to have the opinion of his physicians ; he asked Bouvard whether his disease were curable. "Sire," said Bouvard, "God is all-powerful." Then the king, with a gay and smiling countenance, said in the words of the prophet : *Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi, in domum Domini ibimus* : "I rejoiced at the

things they have told me: we shall go into the house of the Lord." And believing that he was to die on the following day, which was Friday, he immediately added: "O, the desirable, O, the agreeable news! O, the blessed day for me! this is indeed a lucky Friday! But this is not the first time that Fridays have been favorable to me. It was on Friday I ascended the throne, that I gained my first victory at Ponts-de-Ce, that I took the city of St. John d'Angely, and, finally, that I fought Soubisse at l'Île de Re. But this one will be the happiest of all my life, since it will place me in heaven, there to reign eternally with my God." It was in these Christian sentiments that this wise prince prepared to receive the last sacraments, and then to appear before God. He died at St. Germain en Laye, on the 14th of May, 1643.—GUILLOIS, *Explic. du Cat.*, 182.

No good Christian, then, will ever use superstitious means and practices.

Almighty God has appointed two different ways of assisting us in our necessities. The one is by *natural* means; thus—medicines are appointed by God as the natural means for recovering health; food is appointed by him as the natural means of supporting life; prudent examination with reflection is appointed by him to find out the truth of those things that it is well that we should know. The other way is by *supernatural* means; thus—prayers, and particularly the prayers of the Church, whether applied to us immediately or by means of those creatures which she blesses for that purpose, are appointed by God as supernatural means for procuring for us many good things both of soul and body. Fasting and almsdeeds are, too, appointed by God as means for obtaining his mercies and

favours. So also the holy relics of the saints are often, through his infinite goodness, made the means of procuring for us many advantages; as also other pious practices which the holy Church approves, and which we may lawfully and laudably perform, that we may bring down upon our affairs the heavenly blessings of our Lord. But if we have recourse to superstitious means to obtain what we desire, we shall not only not obtain the desired favor, but we shall also lose our soul.

The Sin of Irreligion.

We have said that two sins can be committed against the virtue of religion—the sins of superstition and irreligion. We have seen what the sin of superstition is, and in how many ways it may be committed. Let us now see what the sin of irreligion is, and how it is committed.

The word “irreligion” means a want of due reverence for God and holy things. The sin of irreligion, therefore, consists in showing disrespect to God and holy things. Now, this may be done, (1,) by tempting God; (2,) by committing sacrilege; and, (3,) by simony.

1. *By tempting God.* To tempt any one, means to sound him and try to find out what his power and sentiments are in our regard. To tempt God, then, means to call upon him and expect that he will show his power, or wisdom or mercy, at our pleasure, and in ways that he has not promised. There is a man who, without a special divine inspiration, abstains from food for forty days, trusting that God, by his power, will preserve his health and life.

There is another. He is very sick. He prays for the recovery of his health, but despises the natural means for recovering it.

There is another. He prays for success in a matter of great importance, but neglects to use the natural means for success. There is another. He exposes himself, without just cause, to the proximate occasion of sin, hoping that God, in his mercy, will preserve him from falling into sin. There is another. He borrows a large sum of money, hoping, that God, in his goodness, will send him the means to return it.

There is another. He exposes himself, without a grave cause, to the danger of life, believing that, by the power of God, he will escape all danger.

There is another. He enters upon a state of life, without having all that is necessary to be able to comply with the obligations of that state of life, hoping that God, in his goodness, will supply what is wanting to him.

There is another. He goes to pray, and expects to pray with fervor and confidence without due previous preparation for prayer, hoping that God will supply such preparation.

Now, all such persons show a want of due reverence for God; for the Lord, who is the giver of all natural and supernatural blessings, has given us natural and supernatural means to obtain those blessings; and to neglect the use of those means, and yet expect from God his blessings, is to expect them in ways that he has not appointed. This is to tempt the Lord, and such a tempting of God is a mortal sin. We read in the Gospel of St. Matthew, that the devil tempted our Saviour when standing on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: "Cast thyself down, for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge of thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps, thou hurt thy foot against a stone." Our Saviour

answered : "It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God." (chapt. iv.)

13. What is a sacrilege ?

Sacrilege is the profanation of holy persons, of holy places or of holy things.

Persons, places and things are considered holy if they are consecrated for the service and the worship of God, and not used for worldly purposes. By such a consecration to the service of the Lord, they are invested with a sacred inviolable character. Hence, whatever tends to bring contempt, insult, or ridicule on the religion of Christ, its priests, its temples, ceremonies and sacred things, is an insult offered to the Lord of all glory and sanctity, and such an insult is the sin of sacrilege, which is a most grievous sin. With regard to holy persons, that is, priests and religious, sacrilege is committed by him who strikes them ; for to beat them is to show great contempt and irreverence for their sacred character. It is also the sin of sacrilege to commit a sin against the sixth commandment with any person consecrated to God by the vow of chastity.

With regard to holy places, that is, churches, chapels, monasteries, cemeteries, and other religious houses, or property destined for the support of the clergy, churches and other pious purposes, the sin of sacrilege is committed by those who rob, or maliciously burn or destroy them, or who, contrary to the end for which they were intended, convert them into places for buying and selling, gaming, drinking or other profane uses. These persons incur excommunication. Want of due respect and reverence shown to a person consecrated to God is a greater sacrilege than that which is committed by profaning holy places,

because the sacred character of the priests of God surpasses that of all places of worship. It is also a sacrilege to defile a holy place, by committing in it a grievous sin in word or action, for instance, by speaking very obscenely, or by blaspheming God, or the saints.

With regard to holy things, that is, the holy sacraments, the sacred vases of the sanctuary, the images and relics of the saints, the ornaments of the church and the vestments of the priests, the sin of sacrilege is committed by those who receive any of the sacraments unworthily, especially the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. This sin is also committed by those who, by way of mockery, wear the priestly vestments, mimic the sacred ceremonies of Mass or of any of the sacraments, administer or receive any of the sacraments, convert the holy oil or sacred vessels to profane purposes, show disrespect to the holy Bible, or to holy images and relics by throwing them on the ground in contempt, trampling them under foot and the like. All such acts are sacrilegious, most impious and highly criminal.

That Almighty God detests sacrilege, and has severely punished those who have brought into contempt or shown irreverence to holy persons, places, or things, is easily proved from his sacred writings and from history. With respect to sacred persons, we read in the book of Kings, that when Zacharias, the son of Joiada the priest, reproved king Joas for his impiety, the king's servants collected around him, and stoned him at the king's command, in the court of the house of the Lord. "And when he was dying, he said, The Lord see, and require it. And when a year was come about, the army of Syria came up against Joas, and they came to Juda and Jeru-

saalem, and they killed all the princes of the people.... And on Joas they executed shameful judgments. And departing they left him in great diseases. And his servants rose up against him, for revenge of the blood of the son of Joiada the priest, and they slew him upon his bed, and he died. (2 Chron., xxiv.)

It happened not long ago in this country, that a certain bad Catholic was admonished by his parish priest to put an end to the scandal he gave to the whole parish. Instead of entering into himself he began to ridicule the priest publicly. But he was soon after punished by Almighty God. He broke his leg and became a cripple.

In a place where our Fathers gave a mission, a certain man named one of his horses after the name of one of the Fathers, thus to bring contempt and ridicule upon them. What happened? The horse died suddenly.

With regard to *holy things* and sacred vessels, we find in many parts of Scripture frequent examples of the hatred in which God held all profanation of them, and of the severity with which he punished those guilty of that profanation and irreverence. We read in the book of Chronicles, that Ozias, the king, elated with his victories, "neglected the Lord his God, and going into the temple of the Lord, he had a mind to burn incense upon the altar of incense." The priests opposed him, as their duty required of them; but "Ozias was angry, and holding in his hand the censor to burn incense, threatened the priests. And immediately there arose a leprosy in his forehead..... and they made haste to thrust him out.... And Ozias the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and he dwelt in a house apart, being full of leprosy." (2 Chron., xxvi., 16.) And we read in the book of Kings, that when the

Philistines, after the victory they gained over the Israelites, took the ark of the Lord, carried it away in triumph, and placed it in the temple of their idol, Dagon, the idol was fallen next morning, and broken to pieces before the ark; and "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, and he destroyed them, and afflicted them with emerods.... And there was the confusion of great mortality in the city.... and there was the fear of death in every city, and the hand of God was exceedingly heavy....and the cry of every city went up to heaven." (1 Kings, v., 2, 6.)

In the time of the first French Republic, several regiments of soldiers who were in Italy were passing through a village, when a violent storm suddenly arose, followed by a heavy fall of rain. Some of the soldiers, finding the church open, went in for shelter. It was one of those unhappy years when every effort was being made to destroy religion, and when all those whose faith and piety were not deeply rooted, made a boast of impiety and irreligion. Many of these unhappy soldiers behaved in the Lord's temple as though it were a profane place. Some proposed to have wine brought thither. It was brought in large jars. But, as there were not enough of goblets or cups to drink from, there was one of the soldiers impious enough to provide himself with a sacred ciborium, by a horrible sacrilege. He goes up to the altar, breaks in the door of the tabernacle, dares to take the consecrated vessel in his hand, throws on the ground the sacred Hosts it contained, and goes back to his comrades with his prize, as though he had done something great. But the moment of God's terrible vengeance had arrived. Just as the wretch dipped the holy ciborium in the jar of wine he fell down dead, and, lest any one should doubt that his death

was the act of divine vengeance, the ciborium which he had profaned could not be taken from his hand by any one till the pastor of that afflicted parish was brought, who removed it without any difficulty, and replaced it in the tabernacle. Several inhabitants of the village, who were in the church, were witnesses of the sacrilege committed by the soldier and the terrible chastisement inflicted upon him. One of them, a bad Christian, was converted on the spot, and went to confession the same day. Several others, even amongst the soldiers, did all they could to repair the horrible scandal given on that sad occasion.—LASSAUSSE, *Explic. du Cat. de l' Empire*, 540.

It has never been known that God punishes any one for turning into ridicule, falsehood, idolatry, heresy, superstition and the like; on the contrary, God is pleased with those who confound heresy, idolatry, superstition and all kinds of error. But when the truths and the mysteries of our holy religion are denied, or turned into ridicule, God has, in many instances, shown his displeasure by inflicting terrible punishments on those who are guilty of such crimes. All truth is from God. Therefore, to contradict truth, to deny it, to turn it into ridicule, is to contradict God himself who uttered it—it is to mock the Lord of heaven and earth. No wonder, then, that we often hear of instances in which the wrath of God fell upon such enemies of the true religion. By these punishments God confirms those truths and mysteries which are ridiculed and attacked.

In the village of Edinghausen, situated not far from the town of Bieldeld, in Rhenish Prussia, an impious blasphemer took it into his head one day to ridicule the Holy Eucharist. He sat down at table with some companions, not much better than himself. He took bread

and wine and pronounced over them with mock solemnity the sacred words of consecration. After this sacrilegious parody he distributed the bread and wine among his companions, saying to them with an ironical smile: "Take ye all of this." He had just distributed the bread and wine to the others and was about to take some himself, when suddenly he grew pale; his head fell on his chest, and in a few moments he was a corpse. This terrible judgment of God happened on the fifth of January, 1807. The wretch was buried outside the cemetery, on the feast of the Epiphany. (Schmid et Belet, Cat. II., 146.)

The Abbé Favre relates, that, some years ago, an impious barber of Turin had the impertinence to ridicule a person for wishing to assist at the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. He went into the street through which the procession was passing. There he placed himself with his hat on, in order thus to insult the Catholics and to ridicule the Blessed Sacrament. Behold! when the Blessed Sacrament passed by him he was struck by the hand of God and fell to the ground a corpse. This event made such an impression on the whole city, that the commissary caused the body of the impious man to be exposed before the court-house for thirty-six hours. A great many of the eye-witnesses of this fact are still living; among others M. Raet, formerly rector of Plancherine, in the diocese of Chauberg, who was staying at Turin when this melancholy occurrence took place.

In the year 1563, a Lutheran nobleman in the city of Erfurt ridiculed the Blessed Sacrament, as it was carried in procession by the Rev. Father Th. Baumeier. "Behold," said he, "what a ridiculous thing that old man is carrying!" No sooner had he uttered these words than

he fell speechless to the ground. Dr. J. Hebenstreit was instantly called in, but pronounced the man beyond recovery. A few days after the nobleman was a corpse.

About thirty years ago, on the feast of Corpus Christi, several citizens of Duren, near Aix-la-Chapelle, were sitting together in an inn fronting on the market-place, when the solemn procession of the Most Holy Sacrament was passing. Among those present was the son of the mayor. Now, as the priest gave the benediction, with the Blessed Sacrament at the altar that had been erected in the square, this young man held up a silver dollar and mimicked the sacred ceremony. In a few days the very arm with which he had committed this sacrilege began to mortify; the mortification soon extended to the shoulder, and, not long after, the unhappy man died. Moreover, from this moment, the blessing of God forsook his house; several of his family died, and the rest sunk into poverty and disgrace. In the summer of 18— a mission was given in the town of D., Mass. One of the missionary Fathers said Mass and preached a few sermons, also, in the neighboring village of N. On the following Good Friday, Mrs. H., the parson's wife at N., took it into her head to mimic the missionaries and make a mockery of holy communion. She dressed herself somewhat like a missionary, collected a number of children, made them kneel down and hold a cloth, and then gave them something in mockery of holy communion. Next morning, holy Saturday, Mrs. H. was missed. Search was made, and she was found in the yard, her face buried in a pool of water—a ghastly corpse!

At the burning of the Ursuline Convent near Charlestown, Mass., when the nuns were driven from their cloister at the hour of midnight by a fanatical mob, one of the ruffians had

the hardihood to open the tabernacle, and seizing the sacred vessels, he poured into the pocket of a companion the consecrated hosts which they contained. The latter, on his way back to Charlestown, treated the sacred particles with the most atrocious irreverence, and even jestingly offered them to a tavern-keeper in payment for liquor he had drunk. He then returned home and gave to his wife an account of the night's proceedings. Shortly after he went into the yard, but as he did not return, the family became uneasy, and sought for him everywhere. After searching for some time, they found him—a ghastly corpse! He had died the death of Arius. This fact was related by the late Bishop Fenwick, of Boston.

Towards the close of the last century, there lived a very impious man in Rottweil, a little town of Swabia, Germany. One day, when the Blessed Sacrament in solemn procession passed the house of this wretch, he had the diabolical audacity to scoff at the holy sacrament in the most infamous manner. He placed himself before the window, in his shirt-sleeves, wearing his butcher's apron and a white night-cap on his head. By appearing in this unbecoming dress, he wished to show his contempt and disrespect for the Holy Eucharist. What was still worse, as the Blessed Sacrament passed by him he spat at it. Only a few persons noticed his impiety, otherwise it would have been instantly avenged. But what men failed to do, God was not slow in accomplishing. This blasphemer soon after died the death of a reprobate. This, however, was not all. The dreadful scandal which he had given, and which had become generally known, and the insult which he had offered the divine Majesty, required a public act of reparation. God made use of the following means to effect

this : Immediately after the death of this impious man, such horrible noises, such frightful groanings, lamentations and howlings were heard in his house that no one could live there. Everyone easily guessed the cause of this. The difficulty was, how to put a stop to these strange disturbances. At last, as if inspired by God, the people had recourse to the following expedient : It was resolved that this man's portrait should be painted, in the same dress and posture in which he had appeared when scoffing at the Blessed Sacrament, and that the painting should be placed in an opening made in the wall, that all might see how God punishes those who scoff at the Blessed Sacrament. Strange to say, no sooner was this painting placed in the wall, than the house became quiet. Some years after, the wife of a Protestant preacher, who lived opposite the house, could no longer bear the sight of this horrid portrait. Accordingly, her husband went to the civil magistrate, to obtain an ordinance for the removal of the picture. His petition was granted ; but no sooner was the painting removed, than the former frightful disturbances returned, and continued until the people of the house obtained permission to restore the painting to its place. One of our fathers, an eye-witness of the fact, related this event to me.

About ten years ago, one of our priests received a letter from his father, in Treves, Germany. In this letter a terrible example was related that had occurred in that city, on the occasion of the solemn procession of Corpus Christi.

When the procession passed by the house of a certain Protestant gentleman, his servant-girl who was a Catholic said to her master : "O, come and see the splendid pro-

cession and the faith of the Catholics." In answer to this invitation, the gentleman uttered a horrible blasphemy against the Blessed Sacrament. No sooner had he done so than he fell to the ground a corpse! The whole city looked upon this sudden death as an evident chastisement of God for the horrid crime of blasphemy.

As to *holy places* and churches, it appears from many passages in Scripture that God requires that every respect should be paid them, and that a want of reverence and respect for them has met with his severest chastisements. In the book of Exodus we read that God commanded Moses, and Aaron and his sons, to wash their hands and feet when going into the tabernacle of the covenant: "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony, and when they are come to the altar to offer on it incense to the Lord; lest perhaps they die." (Exodus, xxx., 19.) And in the book of Machabees we read, that when king Antiochus resolved to bring over the Jews to his pagan rites, he defiled the temple of God, and filled it with riots and revellings, and began to persecute the Jews. And from that time forward we are told that all his affairs went wrong, his armies were beaten, his cities taken, and that himself, returning from an unlucky expedition into Persia, "the Lord, the God of Israel, that seeth all things, struck with an incurable and invisible plague worms swarmed out of his body, and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell off, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to the army, and no man could endure to carry him for his intolerable stench." (2 Mach., ix.) And when he entered into himself, and began to remember all the evils he had done at Jerusalem, he promised to repair all damages,

and to adorn the temple with rich gifts, and to multiply the holy vessels ; but all to no purpose. Almighty God would not accept these offerings from his sacrilegious hands and “ he died a miserable death, in a strange country, among the mountains.” (1 Mach., vi.)

But it is particularly to be remembered that Jesus Christ himself, who bore all his own sufferings with the most amazing patience and meekness, was inflamed with the greatest zeal, and manifested his displeasure in a very marked way when he saw the temple profaned. “ When he went up to Jerusalem after the marriage of Cana in Galilee ; and he found in the temple them that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep also, and the oxen, and he poured out the changers’ money, and the tables he overthrew. And he said to them that sold doves : Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic.” (John, ii., 13.) He reprovèd the world, indeed, for many sins, but he would punish with his own hands none but sacrilege. He refused to be judge in parting the inheritance between two brothers ; he refused to judge the woman taken in adultery ; but when he witnessed the temple of God profaned, he took upon himself immediately to be both accuser, judge, and executioner.

You see, then, how great is the evil of profaning the house of God, and how displeasing and disrespectful it is to him to engage yourself, whilst in it, in anything except in praying to him, and praising him, and thanking him for his many favors and graces bestowed on you, and in listening to his words proceeding from the mouth of

his priests. To amuse yourself in church, to speak there on worldly business, to look about to see and be seen, is offensive to God, and will, sooner or later, bring upon you his displeasure and anger. "Have you not houses of your own to eat and drink in," says St. Paul, "and do you despise the church of God?" (1 Cor., xi.) "The Lord is in his holy temple," according to the prophet Habacuc; "Let all the earth keep silence before him." (Hab., ii., 20.)

14. What is simony?

Simony is the crime of buying or selling spiritual things for money or an equivalent.

Want of reverence for God is also shown by those who commit the great sin of simony. Simony means the irreligious, infamous practice of buying or selling holy things for money or an equivalent. An act is bad in itself when its object is unlawful, or contrary to reason, justice, and charity. Now, such is the sacrilegious traffic of buying or selling spiritual things for money or an equivalent, for they are more precious than all temporal goods, and consequently cannot be bought or sold for money. Wisdom, which includes every virtue and is contrary to all acts of injustice, is, says Holy Scripture, "more precious than all riches, and all things that can be desired are not to be compared with her." (Prov., iii., 15.)

Indeed, the abominable practice of simony is repugnant to the divine origin of spiritual things. Jesus Christ, the supreme Master of all spiritual goods, and the Founder of the Roman Catholic Church, said to his Apostles: "Freely you have received, freely give;" (Matt., x, 8.) that is, give gratuitously for the sanctification of the faithful what you have received gratuitously from God's good-

ness and mercy. These divine words contain the fundamental, inviolable doctrine concerning the administration of the sacraments and every thing in connexion with them, as the reception of Holy Orders, church property and religious institutions in general. To acquire, then, something by means of simony, is one of the worst acts of injustice. Therefore ample reparation must be made for all things obtained by simony.

The holy Catholic church has always detested the infamous practice of simony. She is accustomed to inflict most exemplary punishments on all persons guilty of this sin. If such a person is in Holy Orders, she suspends him from all ecclesiastical functions, and if he is a layman, she excommunicates him. It is indeed very just and reasonable to deprive a person of the spiritual graces and treasures of the church, who has so disgracefully abused them.

One of the earliest converts to the Christian faith in the time of the Apostles, was a celebrated sorcerer or magician called Simon. Having seen the miracles worked by the Apostles, and in particular the signs, which frequently followed the conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation, he came to St. Peter, offering a sum of money, and saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I also lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."

But St. Peter rejected with contempt and indignation the offer made him by Simon, and answered him thus: "Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. Do penance for this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if perchance the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Simon, thus baffled in his design, shortly after abandoned the Christian religion.

St. Peter Damian relates (Ep. 5. c. 7.) that a certain man who was guilty of the sin of simony, made very light of this great crime. Now, when he was told to pronounce the words "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," he could not say, "to the Holy Ghost." He could only say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son." He tried several times to say "to the Holy Ghost," but he tried in vain. Now, this happened as a punishment for the sin of simony of which this man was guilty; for "by buying the gifts of the Holy Ghost," says St. Damian, "he forced the Holy Ghost to leave him, and render him utterly unable to pronounce even the name of the third person of the Holy Trinity."

Is it, then, forbidden to receive money or an equivalent for the administration of the sacraments, or for saying Mass for a certain intention? No, it is not forbidden. It is customary to give an "honorary" on the occasion of christening, or a marriage, or a funeral. It is also customary to give an honorary to the priest whenever he is requested to say a Mass for a particular intention, whether for the living or for the dead. Custom has established that this honorary for saying Mass should amount to the sum required for the decent maintenance of the priest for *one* day, and this custom is sanctioned by the Church.

The custom of giving an offering to the priest with the request to offer up the Mass, is one of the most ancient in the Church. We find it even in the Old Law. The Jews were obliged by the Law of God to bring offerings, part of which were consumed in sacrifice and part given to the priests. The Holy Scripture tells us that Judas Macabæus sent a very large sum of money to the priests, with the request that sacrifices might be offered up for

those who died in battle. The early Christians were accustomed to bring offerings during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and one part of the Mass is on this account still called the *Offertory*. The fourth Council of Lateran says, that "though the sacraments are given *freely*, nevertheless the faithful should be exhorted to give the customary offerings."

St. Epiphanius, who lived about three hundred years after the death of our Lord, tells us that a certain Jewish Rabbi, who became a convert to the Church, gave, after his baptism, a large sum of money to the bishop who baptised him with the request to offer up the holy sacrifice for him. We find numerous examples of this kind in history. It is related, in the life of St. John the Almsgiver, who was patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt in the beginning of the seventh century, that a certain man brought him a large sum of money, with the request to offer up a Mass for his son, who had set out on a dangerous voyage.

Now, whatever is given to the priest on the reception of the sacraments, or on the celebration of Mass, is not given as *pay* for the graces received in the sacraments, but as a compensation for his trouble, loss of time, and as a means of support.

St. Paul says, "that he that ministers at the altar should live by the altar." This is certainly just and reasonable, for "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your temporal things?" (1 Cor., ix., 11—13.)

The priest cannot support himself by working at a trade or by entering into business. The Church forbids it, and the faithful would be scandalized. He must devote **all** his time—his whole life—to spiritual things, to the care

of souls. In this country especially, where a young man living in the world has so many opportunities of growing rich, no one but a madman would ever become a priest for the purpose of making money; and indeed no one would anywhere become a priest, except from the highest and holiest motive.

A person engaged in a lawsuit, will willingly pay a lawyer or advocate to take his case in hand to obtain justice. A sick man sends for a physician and pays him liberally for his visits and advice. The priest is the spiritual advocate; he pleads men's cases with God, and obtains mercy and pardon. The priest is the physician of the soul; he devotes his energy, his faculties of mind and body, he sacrifices his health, his time, for the welfare of Christians. It is then most reasonable that they should make some return for his services.

“Let the priests that rule well,” writes St. Paul to St. Timothy, “be esteemed worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” (1 Tim., v., 17.) In his explanation of these words, St. Augustine says, that they are worthy of a double recompense—of the temporal support from the people, and of eternal glory from God, as a reward for the exercise of their holy ministry.

15. How do we worship God by faith ?

1, *By adoring him as the eternal Lord and the Creator of heaven and earth*; 2, *By believing firmly all that he teaches us by the Catholic Church.*

We have seen that God, in the first commandment, prescribes the virtue of religion, which consists in worshipping God in a manner worthy of him. Now, we can-

not worship God in a worthy manner, unless we have a true idea of him.

If the first commandment, then, prescribes plainly the true worship of God, it prescribes also at the same time, the duty of knowing him and the sacred truths which he has revealed for our salvation. Now, there are four great truths which every one must know and believe as a necessary means of salvation. The first of these truths is: *That there is but one living God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth.*

As without faith man cannot please God and go to heaven, his Creator has made faith easy for him.

Man is born a believing creature, and cannot, if he would, destroy altogether this noble attribute of his nature. If he will not accept a belief in the living and uncreated God, he will create and worship some other god instead of the true God. There never has been a real, an absolute unbeliever. All the so-called unbelievers are either knaves or idiots. All the Gentile nations of the past have been religious people; all the pagan powers of the present are also believers. There never has been a nation without faith, without an altar, without a sacrifice.

The belief in the existence of God among men in some sensible form seems to be a want of the human heart. To satisfy this craving after the real Presence of God, men made use of unholy means. Blinded by their passions they fell into idolatry, and, instead of raising themselves to the true, living God, they foolishly worshipped what they deemed the Divine Presence in stones, plants, and animals.

It is God himself who planted in the human heart the desire for his real Presence, and God himself also found means to satisfy this desire.

He first revealed himself to man by the creation. Although hidden in creation, he constantly speaks to man through his great works. An architect speaks to us through a beautiful building, a painter through a painting, a writer through a book. God speaks to men in like manner. "He has manifested his power and divinity in the creation of the world." (Rom., i., 19.) He shows his power in the storm, in the cataract, in the earthquake. "For the invisible things of him are understood by the things that are made." (Rom., i., 20.)

One of the clearest proofs of the existence of God is taken from the necessity of a first moving power. Inactivity is one of the properties of matter. Hence, if we see bodies move, we know that they must have received that moving power from a first agent. If, with my stick, I set in motion, a stone which moves another, the second stone receives its movement from the first, and the first receives its movement from my stick, and my stick received it from my hand. Whence came this moving power to me? From my parents, and they received it from theirs, and so on all along to the first father of the human race. But Adam's body was inert matter like all the bodies of nature. He, therefore, could not be the first cause of the moving power. He must have received it from his Creator, who gave him life and movement, and said: Walk now in the garden of Paradise. It is the Creator, then, who gave to all the stars and planets of the heavens, and to all things in this world organization and movement, with marvellous perfection and harmony.

Besides the moving power, we see efficient causes in the world. The animal produces another of the same kind, and is its cause. The plants, flowers, and trees grow from

seed. But this animal and this seed came from what produced them ; so that, going from the last to the first link in the chain of their reproduction, we come to the first seed and the first animal.

Now, it cannot be said that they engendered themselves, and are the primitive cause of their existence. To say that anything can exist before its creation, is non sense. There is, therefore, an eternal and omnipotent Creator, who is the principal cause of all things that exist. Were he to withdraw his power, or to interrupt the present order of things by depriving us only of the air, of the heat and light of the sun, all things would soon become extinct. So we have all from God, and without him we have nothing and we are nothing.

As God makes known his power in the great works of creation, so he makes his wisdom known in the laws by which he governs the boundless universe.

“The wisdom of God reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly.” (Wisdom, viii., 1.) What admirable order and perfection do we not see in the physical world ! What wonderful harmony and regularity in the movement of the sun, the moon, and the millions of stars. For nearly six thousand years the sun has never failed to rise and set at the usual hour. The order and regular succession of the seasons of the year are also unchangeable in their course. Spring returns periodically to give heat and fecundity to the earth, and development to all the seeds scattered on its surface. When they are in full growth, the summer heat gives increase to the fruits and corn, and autumn brings them to perfect ripeness.

Winter approaches with all its inclemency, and covers the earth with frost and snow, but does not deprive her of

her inexhaustible gifts. She needs rest after giving birth to an abundant harvest, and obliges her children to treat her with care and diligence in hope of a generous reward.

What splendid order and harmony in the heavenly bodies! They move with such rapidity that our sight could not follow them. If they came into collision, the universe would be shaken from its foundation. "They advance," says Holy Scripture, "with the order and obedience of an army in line of battle."

Do we not see the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the animals of the earth, all guided by a wonderful instinct and the laws of nature? Whence comes all this to irrational creatures, unless implanted by the omnipotent hand of God? The perfect order, therefore, that prevails in the heavens, and in all things on earth, clearly proves the existence of God. Indeed, "God did not leave himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons." (Acts, xiv., 16.) Hence St. Paul says that "all men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God; and who, by these good things that are seen, could not understand *Him who is*, neither, by attending to the works, have acknowledged who was the workman. . . . For, if they were able to know so much as to make a judgment of the world, how did they not more easily find the Lord thereof." (Wisd., xiii., 1, 9; Rom., i., 20.) Therefore, "if any one shall say that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be certainly known by the natural light of human reason, through created things, let him be accursed." (Vat. Council., ii., 1.)

The second great truth is:

That there are three persons in God: The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that each of these persons is God, and yet there is but one God.

We have seen that, from the contemplation of the world, its beauty, harmony and order, the human mind is forced to acknowledge the existence of God.

However, by the light of reason alone, we could not know and show what God is.

“Reason tells us that there is a God,” says St. Basil, “but it does not teach us what he is.”

But God, in his goodness, wished us to have of him a knowledge as perfect as possible. So he revealed himself to man. If a friend visits us at night and finds us sitting in the dark, he speaks, he makes use of words to show that he is really present. In like manner, God, wishing that man should have a correct knowledge of him, spoke to man who was sitting in the darkness of this life. He addressed him in words, and made known to him what he must believe and do in order to be saved.

However, God did not reveal all the sacred truths of faith from the beginning. He communicated them gradually to his servants. He revealed, in progress of time, his divine attributes, the Trinity of persons, in the unity of eternal Divine Essence, the means by which he governs the universe and procures the salvation of the human race, what shall be the reward of the faithful and the punishment of the wicked in the other world. He spoke to our first parents in the Garden of Paradise, he spoke to the patriarchs and prophets, and finally, as St. Paul assures us, he spoke for the last time by his only begotten Son.

The knowledge of the Patriarchs, says St. Gregory, was increased in proportion as they approached the time of the coming of the Redeemer. “And the Lord said to Moses: I am the Lord that appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, and my name Adonai

(Jehovah) I did not show them." (Exod., vi., 2, 3.) In the time of the Royal Prophet, divine revelation was still better known, and so, alluding to the patriarchs, he says: "I have more understanding than the ancients." (Ps. 118, 100).

The Apostle says likewise: "which in other generations was not known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy Apostles and Prophets in spirit." (Eph., iii., 5.)

Now, as to the Holy Trinity, this great mystery was hidden, from all eternity, in the bosom of the Divinity, until the Son of God made it known. "No one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither does any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." (Matt., xi., 27.) Now the Son of God has revealed to us that there are three persons in God.

We do not find the name of person given to God in any passage of the Old or New Testament. There are, however, many passages in Holy Writ which express what we understand by person, and thus authorize us to give the name of person to God. "There are three who give testimony in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." (1 John, v., 7.) "What are they? The three divine persons," says St. Augustine. If we say with truth that every rational being is a person, we can, most assuredly, say with more truth that God is a person, because he is in an infinite degree all that constitutes a person.

To answer the objections of infidels and heretics, we are obliged to employ new words to explain the ancient faith and fundamental doctrine of the Church. These terms only illustrate the sacred text, contain nothing profane or contradictory, and are not those profane novelties of words which the Apostle counsels to avoid, when he

writes to St. Timothy: "Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties of words, and oppositions of knowledge, falsely so called." (vi., 20.)

Now, we give to the first person in God the name of Father. The name of a person distinguishes him from everything that is not himself, from all who are in connexion with him. Now, no better name than that of Father could be given to the first person in God to distinguish him from the two other persons of the Holy Trinity. What we principally consider and admire in a father is his great yearning to communicate himself and all his goods, as far as possible, to his children. As his yearning of communicating himself and all his goods to his children is natural in an earthly father, we say that it is from God. Such yearning, therefore, is also found in God. In him, however, the yearning of communicating himself and all his goods is infinite—it is essential to his nature, for God is infinite love, and love culminates in the reproduction of itself, that is, of generating its own image.

Now, the first person in God being Father, eternally begets as such another self, who is his Son, his most perfect image. He, together with his Son, sends forth a third Self, proceeding from both as from one principle, who is their reciprocal Love—the Holy Ghost, so that the one and the same divine essence is quite the same in each of the three divine persons. These great truths were taught by Jesus Christ. He tells us in the Gospel, that there is in God the procession of the Son from the Father. "I proceeded," he says, "and came from God. I came not of myself, but he (the Father) sent me." (John, viii., 42.)

The Son proceeds from the Father as an effect from its cause. This spiritual procession of the Son or the

Adorable Word is a real substantial generation. "Thou art my Son," says God the Father; "this day have I begotten thee." (Ps., ii., 7.)

However, when speaking of the generation of the Son, we must confess and say with St. Ambrose: "My mind is troubled, my voice becomes mute, and not only mine, but that of the angels, of the cherubim and seraphim."

To conceive, however, a faint idea of this divine generation, we should remember that there are two kinds of generation—a generation of lifeless things, and a generation of living beings.

The generation of lifeless things is the passage or transition of something that did not exist into a state of being.

The generation of a living being is the origin of a living being, proceeding from a living principle, and receiving from it its substance.

Thus a father, as he is a living principle, begets a living son, to whom he is united by the paternal substance transmitted to him. Still we must not suppose that everything in the son, such as hair, size, etc., should have all the characteristic impress of generation. We call engendered only that which is necessary for the son to resemble his father.

Now, do we not, according to those preliminaries, find a real, perfect generation in the procession of the Word?

It proceeds from a living principle, being produced as it is by an intellectual operation.

When we think of something that we know and understand perfectly well, we form in our mind a correct idea of it. Now, God the Father from all eternity, knows himself and all his divine perfections. He necessarily contemplates

himself, and forms, in his divine mind, a perfect image of himself, called his Word or Son. This image is a living image, for it resembles the living principle from whom it comes; and, as the substance of the Father is indivisible, and is as such communicated to the Word, the Son is consubstantial with the Father. Hence Jesus Christ says, "As the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself." (John, v., 26.) "I and the Father are one." (John, x., 30.) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John, xiv., 10.) It is, therefore, something far greater in God to be Father than to be Lord; for as Father, he begets his Son, who is equal to himself in all his divine perfections, whilst as Lord he created the universe, which is infinitely less than his Son. As the first person in God, then, is the first and eternal principle and source of the Holy Trinity, the first person could not receive a better name than that of Father, to distinguish him from the other persons.

There is another procession in God, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son as from one single principle. This truth, too, we are taught by our dear Saviour. He says: "But when the Paraclete (Holy Ghost) shall come, whom I will send you from the Father, he shall give testimony of me." (John, xv., 26.) "All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore, I said that he (the Holy Ghost) shall receive of mine and will declare it to you." (John, xvi., 15.)

This procession of the Holy Ghost, however, is not like that of the Word. The procession of the Word, as we have said, is a real, substantial generation, whilst the procession of the Holy Ghost is only a procession of Love.

As our soul is the image of God, it is not surprising to

find, in its intellectual faculties, a procession somewhat similar to this divine procession—a procession of operations similar to those in God. When we are in profound meditation, we perceive the singular phenomenon of our thoughts and ideas; we know and feel that they proceed from our intellectual faculties.

The mind conceives an idea, a word; it works upon it, and the tongue expresses it in an intelligible manner.

But the activity of the mind is not limited to that operation. After having conceived a word, or idea, it experiences a certain love for it, and the heart expands with joy at this favorite production of the mind.

This spontaneous excitement of love is a second procession, presented to us by the superior faculty of the soul.

There is, however, an infinite difference between these two processions and those in God the Father. In him they are divine, living Persons, whilst in us they have neither personality nor life.

Knowing the Holy Trinity, we can find, in nature, striking emblems of this great mystery.

The human soul is a type of the Holy Trinity, endowed as it is with its three distinct faculties of memory, understanding, and will, with which it seems to be blended.

Another is the sun which is at once furnace, light and heat. The root, the stem, and the branches form but one tree. But all these imperfect figures or emblems fall very short of proving and explaining the depths of the mystery.

The *third great truth*, which every one must know and believe as a necessary means of salvation, is: That the second person of God—the Son, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, took to himself a body and soul like ours,

in the chaste womb of the immaculate Virgin Mary. The divine person assumed the human nature so that the two natures, the divine and the human, were united in the one person of Jesus Christ. In this union, the two natures were not confounded, but remain perfect in their union and essence, for Jesus Christ is God of the substance of his Father, and is man of the substance of his mother. He, therefore, is perfect God and perfect man at the same time.

Christ's body was, like ours, composed of flesh and bones. When our dear Saviour, after his resurrection, appeared in the midst of his apostles and disciples, they were frightened, and thought that he was a spirit. But Jesus said to them: "See my hands and feet, it is I myself; for a spirit hath no flesh and bones as you see me to have" (Luke, xxiv., 37, 39.)

Jesus also had a soul like ours. He was susceptible of all the affections of body and soul, sin alone excepted. Weariness, fear, and sadness affected and oppressed him so much that he exclaimed: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." (Matt., xxvi., 38.) "As the soul," says St. Thomas, "is a spiritual substance superior to the body, God, in his infinite power, wisdom, mercy, and glory, pre-ordained from all eternity that the Word (his Son) was to be united to the body by means of the soul." "And the Word was made flesh (man), and dwelt among us; and we have seen the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John, i., 14.)

We adore Jesus Christ as God and Man. There are two distinct things to be considered in the respect and honor which we testify to a man in high power and dignity—his person, and the reason why we honor him. When we bow to him, or kiss his hand in sign of friend-

ship and respect, or when we admire and applaud his virtue, knowledge, merit, or when we pay due attention to his orders, it is his person we respect and revere in all these things.

In like manner we honor and adore the divine person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the hypostatic union of his divinity with the humanity ; for he is the principle of all virtues and eternal wisdom, and consequently merits divine honor and adoration. "For which cause God hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above all names : that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (Phil., ii., 9, 10, 11.) Conducted by the Holy Ghost, the wise men from the East adored him in Bethlehem. (Matt., ii., 11.) The Apostles went to the mount where Jesus had appointed them, and seeing him, they adored him. (Matt., xxviii., 16.) That the explicit faith in the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Son of God is also required as a necessary means of salvation, we learn from Jesus Christ and his church.

"This is life everlasting," says our Saviour, "that they may know thee (God the Father) the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent ;" (John, xvii., 3), for, says he, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," that lead man to the Father. Hence "no man cometh to the Father but by me." (John, xiv., 6.)

This doctrine is clearly expressed in the following words of the Athanasian Creed : "He, therefore, who wishes to be saved, must thus think of the Trinity," that is he must believe the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as explained in

this Creed. "Futhermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- But what necessity was there that Jesus Christ should suffer for our redemption? Adam sinned, and all mankind being descended from him, inherited his sin, and deserved hell. In order to obtain pardon it was necessary that men should make full satisfaction to God for their sins. But men, as finite creatures, were not able to make such satisfaction to the infinite majesty of God. What then did God do? "God our Saviour wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth: for there is one God, and one Mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim., ii., 4, 5.) Now, the office of a mediator is to reconcile two opposite parties. Original sin separated mankind very far from God. It required a powerful mediator, who by his divinity and humanity, was capable to grant us pardon and grace, and reconcile us with our omnipotent and merciful Creator. Jesus Christ most bountifully accomplished this divine mediation. He descended from heaven in the midst of us with his divine Nature, presented himself to his heavenly Father with our mortal nature, and thus offered himself up as a propitiatory Victim of reconciliation: "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, so Jesus also made himself partaker of the same: wherefore it behoves him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high-priest before God, and be a propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb., ii., 14, 17.)

"Christ died for all, that they who now live may not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." (2 Cor., v., 15.) On account of the merits of

Jesus Christ, the heavenly Father has adopted us as his children. "Who hath predestined us to be children of adoption through Jesus Christ." (Eph., i., 5.)

To adopt any one is to entitle him to a part or the whole of our possessions. To do this, we must be rich and generous; For, if we have hardly anything to give, or if we are wealthy without being generous, no one would wish to become our adoptive child. But God's riches are immense, and his bounty is inexhaustible. Hence it is in his power to adopt us, and give us possession of an everlasting inheritance. "God sent his Son that we might receive the adoption of sons, and sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying—Abba, Father," (Gal., iv., 6.) (2 Cor., v., 15.) Thus, Jesus Christ, as God and man, has obtained grace and mercy for us in this life, and immortality in the next, by the glorious triumph of his resurrection.

Hence St. Peter says; "Be it known to you, that there is no salvation in any other name than that of Jesus Christ; for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved." (Acts. iv., 10, 12.) "Thus," says St. Alphonsus, "there is no hope of salvation except in the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence St. Thomas and all theologians conclude, that, since the promulgation of the Gospel, it is necessary, not only as a matter of precept, but also as a means of salvation (*necessitate medi*) to believe *explicitly* that we can be saved only through our Redeemer." (Reflections on the Pass. of Jesus Christ, Chap i., No. 19.)

Now, St. Thomas Aquinas explains how necessary it is for salvation to know the mystery of the Incarnation. This saint asks the question: Did Jesus Christ when he descended into hell (Limbo), deliver the children who

died in original sin ? and he answers : There is a certain principle and doctrine which we must never lose sight of when there is question of salvation. This principle is that no salvation is possible for any one who is not united to Jesus Christ crucified. Hence the great Apostle St. Paul says : "It is Jesus Christ whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom., iii., 25.)

Now, those unfortunate children were not united to Jesus Christ by their own faith, because they had not the use of reason which is the foundation of faith ; nor were they united to Jesus Christ by the faith of their parents, because the faith of parents was not sufficient for the salvation of their children ; nor were they united to Jesus Christ by means of a sacrament, because under the Old Law there was no sacrament which of itself had the virtue of conferring either grace or justification.

Besides, eternal life can be obtained only by means of sanctifying grace. "The grace of God is life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom., vi., 23.)

Therefore, all who died at any age, without perfect charity and faith in the Redeemer to come, as well as those who die without the sacrament of spiritual regeneration after the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, are not purified from the mortal stain of original sin, and are, on this account, excluded from the kingdom of eternal glory.

The explicit belief in the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Son of God, is therefore of the greatest importance. This belief teaches us the origin of the world, its creation by God the Father ; it teaches us the supernatural end of man, his fall, and the redemption and salvation of mankind by God the Son ; it teaches us the sanctification of souls by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Now, though, by the merits of Jesus Christ, heaven was opened again for those who repent of their sins, do penance for them, and keep the commandments of God to the end of their life, yet hell remained open as ever before, for all those who continue to transgress the commandments of God, and live in mortal sin until death. This is the *fourth great truth, which every one must know and believe as a necessary means of salvation, namely: that God rewards, in heaven, those who keep his law, and punishes, in hell, those who transgress it.* This great truth presupposes another; it supposes the truth, that the soul of man will live forever. We now and then meet with a class of men who impiously deny their eternal existence, who assert that they have no soul, and that there is no eternal reward or punishment hereafter, "They," (the wicked) says Holy Scripture, "have said, reasoning within themselves, but not right: The time of our life is short. . . . We are born of nothing; and after this we shall be as if we had not been. . . .our body shall be ashes, and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist which is driven away by the beams of the sun, and overpowered with the heat thereof. . . . Come therefore and let us enjoy the things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine. . Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part in luxury. . . .Let us oppress the poor, just man, and not spare the widow, nor honor the ancient gray-hairs of the aged. . . .These things they thought and were deceived; for their own malice blinded them. And they knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of

justice, nor esteemed the honor of holy souls. For God created man incorruptible, and to the image of his own likeness he made him." (Wisdom, ii.)

The wicked, says Holy Scripture, reason with themselves, but not right. Indeed, their reasoning clearly proves that they have a soul; for their thoughts and reasonings do not proceed from the body, but from the soul. If bodies could think, their thoughts would be divisible like them. But can we imagine a half, or a third, or a quarter of a thought?

The operation of a being is always like the substance which produces it. A material operation proceeds from a material substance, and a spiritual operation proceeds from a spiritual substance. Now, to think and to reason is a spiritual operation. Our thoughts and reasonings, therefore proceed from a spiritual, substance, which we call soul.

A body is limited by time and place. If our thoughts, then, proceeded from the body, they also would, like the body, be limited by time and place. But neither time nor place can limit our thoughts. Our thoughts can pass in a moment up to heaven and down to hell, through the length and breadth of the earth, and down to the lowest part of it. In our thoughts we can recall the years that are past, and reach things in the far future, when the last day of this world will be over and eternity shall have begun. Our thoughts, therefore do not proceed from the body, but from the soul.

The body cannot conceive any desire. But we experience in us an insatiable desire for everlasting happiness. Such a desire proceeds from the soul which cannot die.

The body cannot learn languages, conceive plans of magnificent churches, palaces, steam-boats, locomotives;

the body cannot count days, dates, distances, money, and above all, know and love God. It is only the soul that can do all this.

The body cannot say, "I will, and I will not." There is a man. He beats his neighbor, and is sentenced to be imprisoned for a month, because he was not obliged to beat his neighbor. He could do so or not, as he liked, because he has free will. But if a stone falls from a building and hurts a man, the stone is not imprisoned, because it has no free will. Free will is not then a faculty of the body, but of the soul which can will and choose whether it will do good or evil. "Before man are life and death, good and evil : that which he shall choose shall be given him." (Eccles., xv.)

Now, the soul of man is immortal, incorruptible. The corruption of a thing takes place by the separation of the parts of which it is composed. But the soul, being a spiritual substance, is not composed of parts. Hence no separation of parts can ever take place in the soul. Therefore the soul is incorruptible, immortal ; it will live forever. The soul is not like those things which can be seen by the eye. No rational being ever said, "I saw my soul," because the soul is a spirit, which is not visible to the eyes of the body. The soul does not wear away like things in this world. It does not fade like a flower, or like the colors of the rainbow. Hence we say the soul is immortal. That means it will never die as the body dies. The soul will not be nailed down in a coffin, or buried in a grave. When the body dies, the soul will go out of this world to God, who made it.

We are created to live forever. It is true we must die ; but it is only our body that is doomed to the grave, and that only for a time. Death does not destroy us ; it

separates only the soul from the body for a certain number of years. Ah ! yes, after a while Almighty God will raise us again to life, that we may hear our eternal fate. This is the infallible doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Wonder not at this," he says, "for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life ; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John, v., 28, 29.) This resurrection of the body will take place, as St. Paul assures us, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible." (1 Cor., xv., 52.)

" Oh ! say not that we die !
 Say not that we, whose heaven-born souls inherit
 Their life from Life, can ever pass away ;
 That we, whose source is the Eternal Spirit,
 Can yield what is from God to slow decay."

After a time, in which everything passes away, man shall enter upon an eternity in which nothing passes away. The heavens and the earth will pass, but God and the soul shall remain for ever. It has been decreed by God that eternity should be closely united to man's being, as it is to His own. God and man shall live forever.

When Jesus was alive on the earth, there was a certain man called Jairus. He had an only daughter, a girl twelve years old. This girl was dying. Jairus went to Jesus. He fell down on his knees before Him, and asked Him to come and cure his daughter. While Jairus was there, somebody came to him and told him that his daughter was dead ! Jesus heard this, and he said to Jairus : " Do not be afraid ; only believe, and your daughter shall be safe."

So Jesus went with Jairus to his house. They found people crying round the dead girl. Jesus told all the people to go out of the room except the father and mother of the girl, and his apostles. Then Jesus who is almighty, took hold of the hand of the dead child, and said "Girl, I say to thee, arise!" As soon as Jesus had said these words, her soul came back, and she rose up and walked! (Luke, viii.) You see how it was. The body died. But the Scripture says the soul *came back* from the other world; so the soul did not die with the body.

Our life, therefore, is not finished at the grave. We shall be for ever either in heaven or in hell. The infidel or great sinner may ridicule and deny this doctrine. But what will the denial of this truth avail him? It avails him just as little as, nay, even less than, it would avail a robber or a murderer to say, "I do not believe either in the existence of a policeman who can take me prisoner, or of a judge who can sentence me to death."

The man who denies his eternal existence is a liar. His lies will not change the decrees of the Almighty; they will not restrain the power of God; they will not prevent our Lord from carrying out his threats. Let the infidel say, "I do not believe in the immortality of the soul;" his disbelief will not annihilate his soul.

"What," exclaims St. Paul, "if some of them have not believed? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid. But God is true, and every man is a liar." Will the sun shine less brilliantly because a man shuts his eyes, in order that he may not see its light? And will God and all the truths he has revealed be less true because an infidel, a great sinner, denies those truths?

To him then, who impiously asserts that he has no soul,

answers simply this: "If you say you have no soul, you must consider yourself simply an animal; and since you are pleased to be an animal, you had better go and live with the class of beings to which you belong.

"When you are travelling, do not take the passenger train which is intended for men, who have a soul, but take the cattle train.

"When you are invited to a dinner, go and take it with that class of brutes to which you belong. If you are a physician, let no sick man send for you, for no sensible man ever sent for a brute to be cured by it. If you are a teacher, let no parents send their children to you, for no one sends his children to an animal for instruction. If you are a business-man, let no one transact business with you, for a horse or any other kind of animal that you choose to be, cannot transact business.—Yes, if you consider yourself a brute, let men treat you as such, let them cast you out of their society, for they have a soul, and on this account their dignity is but a little inferior to that of the angels."

Reason acknowledges the immortality of the soul; revelation speaks of it explicitly, and of the resurrection of the body, of the immortality and eternity of our whole being. "I believe the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." "And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting." (Matt., xxv., 46.) This is the unchangeable decree of the Almighty. "My counsel," says he, "shall stand." (Isai., 46, 10.) As men, then, are created to live for ever, they can be rewarded as well as punished for ever.

Now, it is in heaven that God rewards those who have done his will on earth. It is in heaven where he shows himself as a Father of infinite goodness. There he com-

municates himself and all his goods, as far as possible, to all the elect. As a king is with his people, a father with his children, a teacher with his pupils, so God will always be with the elect in heaven, recreating and feeding them, and filling them with numberless delights and unspeakable happiness. They will constantly enjoy his presence which was hidden from them here below. They will see God and speak to him face to face, more familiarly than children speak to their father, and God the Father will penetrate them with ineffable sweetness and consolation, for "He shall be their God, their Father, their glorifier, their all."—Yes, "He that cometh to God," says St. Paul, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder to them that seek him." (Heb., xi., 6.)

As heaven is the place where God rewards his faithful servants, so is hell the place where he punishes all the wicked. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that, as the just shall enter into everlasting life, so shall the wicked go into everlasting fire. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt., xxv., 41.) This fire of hell, says St. Thomas Aquinas, is enkindled by the infinite power of God as an instrument of his divine vengeance, to burn the souls, and also their bodies after the general resurrection; it is a fire which tortures and excruciates the damned with much greater intensity than natural fire can affect our body in this world; for it does not operate by the virtue of its own nature, but by the infinite power of God, who has given it the peculiar property to torment the damned in proportion to their crimes.

Many a sinner wishes that there were no hell; he even tries to believe that there is no such place of punishment.

But what does such a wish, such a belief avail? Whether he believes it or not, there is a hell; there is an eternal punishment. His foolish wish and belief will not keep him out of it. He who does not believe in hell, now when he can escape it, shall believe in it hereafter when he can no longer escape it. The demons bear witness to this truth.

The soul that quits her body in the state of mortal sin—at enmity with God, remains in that state of enmity with God for all eternity; it is fixed unalterable in the spirit of impenitence as the grace of repentance is not granted in the other world. “Wherever the tree falleth, there it shall lie.” As the soul can no more repent, its sin can never be forgiven, it will always remain. It is on this account that the soul continues to be for ever a subject of punishment.

St. Thomas asks the question: “Is hope possible for the damned?” and he answers: According to the Apostle, hope produces joy; but the damned are not in joy; they are in everlasting grief and desolation according to these words of Isaias, (Xlv., 14.): “Behold, my servants shall rejoice, and you (the wicked) shall be confounded. Behold my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit.” The damned, therefore, can have no hope of ever being delivered from their eternal torments. Endless perpetuity is one of the awful conditions of the punishment which the damned suffer, and knowing their torments to be eternal, they can have no hope of deliverance from their everlasting captivity and damnation.”

But some one may ask: Would it not argue cruelty and a want of mercy in God were he to punish the wicked for

ever? The answer is plain: God has decreed that the rewards of the just in heaven for their good lives on earth should surpass all that the eye has seen, the ear has heard the heart has conceived. In like manner has God decreed that the punishments which the wicked have to suffer in hell for their bad lives should surpass all that we can see, all that we can hear, all that we can conceive in our heart. God has decreed that the rewards of the just should last for ever, and he has also decreed that the punishments of the wicked shall be everlasting. It is the will of the Lord that by the everlasting rewards of the just his infinite mercy should be glorified for all eternity; and it is also his will that by the everlasting punishments of the wicked his infinite justice should be made manifest for ever and ever. Let us "think well of the Lord;" that is, we must believe that the justice of God is just as great as his mercy.

It is the common opinion of theologians, says St. Alphonsus, that any person who has come to the use of reason and lives and dies in ignorance of these four great truths of our holy religion, even without any fault on his part, cannot be saved.

There are, however, many other revealed truths, which we must believe, but which a person may not know without any fault on his part, and is on this account, not responsible for the want of knowledge of such truths. Such a person may be saved if he is otherwise disposed to believe and do all that God requires in order to be saved. That we must believe all the truths revealed by God for our salvation with at least *implicit* faith, is evident from the words of our dear Saviour. After commissioning his Apostles to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded, he added: "And he that

believeth not (namely, all things that he had commanded) shall be condemned."

Now, besides those four great truths the knowledge of which is a necessary means of salvation, there are others which we must know as a matter of precept, which is binding under pain of mortal sin. We must know and believe all the truths contained in the Apostle's Creed, namely : That God has created heaven and earth, preserves and governs the universe ; that the blessed Virgin Mary is the true mother of God, was conceived without sin and ever remained a virgin ; that Jesus Christ by his own power rose from the dead on the third day after his death, ascended into heaven, and, there sitteth at the right of his eternal Father ; that on the last day of the world, all men shall rise, and be judged by Jesus Christ.

We must also believe the communion of saints, that is, that each of the faithful who lives in the grace of God, shares in the merits of all the saints, living and dead.

We must believe in the remission of sins, that is, that our sins are forgiven in the sacrament of penance, if we are truly sorry for them.

We must also know the ten commandments of God and the six precepts of the church, the seven sacraments and the graces which they confer upon the receiver, especially the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, penance and the holy Eucharist, and the other sacraments when we are about to receive them.

We are also obliged to know the Lord's Prayer, which is a prayer composed by Jesus Christ and left to us in order that we may know how to ask the graces most necessary for our salvation. Every one should also learn the Hail Mary, in order to know how to recommend himself to the mother of God.

Every one should also know that, in the other world, there is a place called Purgatory.

Many of the just die without having fully cancelled the temporal punishments due to their sins. On account of the sorrow for their sins, and the love for God which they conceived in this world, says St. Alphonsus with other theologians, God remits all the guilt of their sins; but not all the temporal punishments due to them. They cannot cancel those punishments by acquiring new merits, for their earthly pilgrimage is over. Upon them is come that fatal, "night in which no one can work." (John, ix., 4.) They are no longer at liberty to choose doing penance, but are forced to suffer for their sins, and on this account their sufferings are no longer of any merit. Although they are unable to assist themselves, yet they can be assisted, in their sufferings, by our prayers and good works.

We should, therefore, often pray for the souls in purgatory that they may be relieved in their sufferings. (Council of Trent, by St. Alph. Sess. 25, n. 17 and 20.) (Catech. on Faith, n. 12.)

We also must know and believe that it is very useful to pray to the saints, especially to the Mother of God, to obtain through their prayers, the graces and blessings of God necessary for our salvation. Every Christian, whether he be a priest, or layman, a married or single person, lawyer or physician, etc., is obliged to know the principal duties of his state of life. As these truths have been revealed by God, he commands all men to believe them under pain of eternal damnation. "He that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark., xvi., 16.)

From the fact that Jesus Christ has commanded all men to believe and to do under pain of eternal damnation all that

he has taught for our salvation, it clearly follows that he must have left in this world a teacher whom he endowed with the gift of teaching his doctrine with infallible certainty and without the least admixture of error. Without such a teacher it would be impossible to know what the true doctrine of Jesus Christ is.

Now, our dear Saviour gave to the world, such an infallible teacher of his doctrine in his Apostles, and especially in the person of St. Peter and his lawful successors, upon whom he built his Church, the Roman Catholic Church, in which alone the lawful successors of St. Peter and of the other Apostles are found. "I say to thee, thou art Peter, (a Rock) and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth it shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. xvi., 18-19.) "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep:" (John xxi., 15-17.) As Jesus Christ built his Church upon Peter, and said, that the gates of hell would never be able to prevail against her, it is clear that the true Church is found only where Peter or his successor is. Now, it is clearly proven from history, that the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church alone is the lawful successor of Peter, and therefore the Roman Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ, the true, infallible Teacher of his doctrine. This is an article of faith. "He," therefore, "who will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matt., xviii., 17.)

As we have, in the Catholic Church, the faithful guardian and infallible teacher and interpreter of the doctrine

of Christ, it follows that we must believe, with unwavering, steadfast faith, all that the Church teaches us. "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." (Luke, x., 16.) (See "Church and her enemies.")

There are then, two reasons which oblige us to believe the truths of faith. The first is, because God, the infallible Truth, has revealed them.

Our belief in a person's word is firm in proportion as we think that he is not deceived in his knowledge; that he knows well what he says, because he is wise and prudent; that he will not deceive us, because he loves the truth and fears God. Thus, in transacting business, we give more credit to a learned and able than to an ignorant man; to a learned man who is virtuous than to one who is not so.

Now, God is the first and essential Truth. His knowledge extends to all things and is infinitely perfect; he is essentially true in his words. He knows things only as they are, and can speak them only as he knows them. Therefore we must have the most respectful, submissive faith in all that he has revealed to us, and believe his mysteries with the utmost firmness and simplicity, with an unwavering conviction of their reality.

We must believe all the articles of faith more firmly than we believe the proposition: "The whole is greater than a part." We should believe them more firmly than what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands; we should be more certain of these articles of faith than we are of our own existence, because, though all these things are realities of which we cannot doubt, yet the things of faith are still more real, because

they have been taught by God, who cannot deceive us, while we know the others only through the senses, which often deceive us, and by the assurance of our mind, which, being enveloped in darkness, may easily be deceived; so that there is nothing true in the universe of which we ought to be so certain, of which our understanding should be so fully convinced, as of the mysteries of religion. "Faith," says St. Basil, "always powerful and victorious, exercises a greater ascendancy over minds than all the proofs which reason and human science can furnish, because faith obviates all difficulties, not by the light of manifest evidence, but by the weight of the infallible authority of God, which renders them incapable of admitting any doubt." It was thus that Abraham believed when, notwithstanding all the impediments of nature, he felt sure that he should see himself the father of a son, and through him of many nations. "He believed in hope against hope," says St. Paul, "that he might be made the father of many nations, according to what was said to him: 'So shall thy seed be.'" And he was not weak in faith, for he considered neither his old age nor that of his wife, Sarah. He distrusted not the promise of God, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being most fully convinced that whatsoever God has promised he is able to perform.

The faith of Moses was so great that St. Paul says of him, that "he acted with the invisible God as though he were visible."

Similar was the faith of the famous and valiant Count de Montfort, who, being told that our Lord in the Host had appeared visibly in the hands of the priest, said to those who urged him to go and see the miracle: "Let those go and see it who doubt it; as for myself, I believe

firmly the truth of the mystery of the Eucharist as our mother the holy Church teaches it. Hence, I hope to receive in heaven a crown more brilliant than those of the angels; for they, being face to face with God, have not the power to doubt."

The noble Count St. Eliazer used to say, that with regard to matters of faith, he believed them so firmly that if all the theologians in the world strove to persuade him to the contrary, their logic would not have the slightest effect on him.

And, in effect, faith ought to take precedence of reason, demonstration, experience, and all other motives of certitude, with the true Christian and new man regenerated in Jesus Christ. "Consider," says St. Augustine, "that you are not called reasonable but faithful, since when any one is baptized we say: He has become one of the faithful."

We must have this firm faith not only in some but in all the truths which God has made known, although they may be altogether incomprehensible to us. Faith will not allow of the rejection of even one; and he who should voluntarily entertain a doubt of one single article—one single point of faith—could not be said to have faith at all. We believe everything that God has revealed, precisely for this reason: that *God has said it*.

The word of God, who is infallible truth itself, and who cannot deceive nor be deceived, is the *why* and *wherefore* of our belief. To say or to think, I believe this article, this truth of faith, but I do not believe that, is as much as to say or think, I believe that God tells the truth in this point, but he tells it not in that other; it is as much as to say God is capable of telling a lie. This is blasphemy; it is even the denial of God's existence.

And also to say or think, I cannot believe such an article or such a mystery of faith, because it is too obscure, too incomprehensible, and contrary to reason, is to exhibit a lamentable lack of reason. To be a man, it is necessary to have reason. Reason is the light of man. But reason tells us that it is necessary to submit to faith, and that there is no sense in him who wishes to submit to his reason the very essential principle of his reason, and that to wish to understand what is above his intelligence is to be without intelligence.

Reason tells us that our religion would not be divine if it were not above reason. For God would not be God if he were not incomprehensible, and my soul could not adore him if my mind could comprehend him. It is one thing to say that such a mystery is contrary to reason, and another to prove it. In order to prove that a doctrine is contrary to reason, we must have a clear, precise idea of what that doctrine is. We can say, for instance, that it is contrary to reason to assert that a square is a circle, for we have a clear, precise idea of what a square is, and what is a circle. But we cannot say with certainty that a doctrine or a mystery of our holy faith is contrary to reason, for we can never have a full, clear, precise idea of that doctrine or mystery. We cannot have this clear idea, simply because those doctrines are far above reason. We cannot say, for instance, that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the doctrine of three divine Persons in one divine Substance, is contrary to reason, because we can never have a clear, precise idea either of God's essence or of the nature of the three divine Persons. And what is true of the Trinity is true also of all the other doctrines and mysteries of our holy faith. They are not against

reason, but they are above reason. Reason is above the senses, and faith is above reason.

“Certainly,” says St. John Chrysostom, “since the works of God incomparably surpass the capacity of our minds, the thoughts whereby we seek to penetrate the abysses of faith are always accompanied with folly, and resemble labyrinths which it is very easy to enter, but from which it is almost impossible to come forth; these thoughts spring from pride, and as proud minds are ashamed to believe or to admit that which they cannot understand, they entangle themselves in difficulties from which they cannot easily issue. Is it true, then, proud man, that you can understand how the sun and stars were created; how the earth, with all its riches, was called forth from chaos; how the magnet attracts iron; how a single grain of corn sown in the earth produces a thousand other grains? You are not ashamed to own that you cannot answer these things; and when there is question of things of a more sublime nature, of things that are above the comprehension of angels, you will not avow your ignorance—you make bold efforts to understand them. Fool! the shame is not the inability to comprehend them, but the daring to sound them.”

Speaking of Rahab, who received the spies, and of whom St. Paul says that her faith saved her from the unhappy fate of her fellow-citizens, St. John Chrysostom praises the simplicity of her faith, and adds: “This woman did not examine what the spies said, neither did she reason with herself thus: How can it be possible that the captives and fugitives now wandering in the desert will capture a city so strong and so well provided as ours? Had she argued thus, she had been lost.”

Those of the Israelites, on the contrary, who, hearing of the prodigious strength and power of the countries they were to conquer, yielded to diffidence, notwithstanding the divine assurance that they should vanquish their enemies, even without fighting them, were deprived by their infidelity of the happiness which God had promised to their faith.

What could be more strange or more opposed to reason than to command a father to sacrifice his only and most innocent son ? And yet Abraham put himself in readiness to do so, without discussing the commandment or adducing arguments to prove its unreasonableness ; he considered only the divinity and wisdom of him who commanded.

Another person, wishing to show himself more reasonable refused to strike a prophet, as he had been ordered to do, because the thing seemed to him improper. But his disobedience was soon punished, for a lion rushed upon him and devoured him, not far from the place where the fault had been committed.

Saul, having been ordered by God to put the Amalekites to death with their flocks and herds, found it reasonable to spare the king, and to set aside the best and fattest of the flocks for sacrifice; in recompense for his fine reasoning on the subject, he was overwhelmed with many evils, and finally lost his kingdom.

The child at the mother's breast takes what it sees not; sometimes he will even close his eyes when he might see, as though he confided entirely in his mother, and in the love she bears him; in like manner the soul sucks the milk of faith from the bosom of the Church, which she sees not; she reposes on the infinite wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ, who can teach her nothing but what is true, and

give her nothing that is not good. It is on this juice of divine faith that the just man lives, as St. Paul tells us.

The faith of St. Teresa was so firm that it seemed to her she could convert all the heretics from their errors ; and so simple that she said the less she comprehended a mystery, the more firmly she believed it and the more devotion it excited in her ; she tasted a singular pleasure in not being able to comprehend it. She silenced all objections to a mystery by saying : “ The Son of God, Jesus Christ, has revealed it to us, and we have no more questions to ask.”

The second reason, which obliges us to believe the truths of faith is, because God, through his infallible teacher, the church, proposes them to our belief, and commands us, under pain of eternal damnation, to believe and do what she teaches us for our salvation.

“ To reject, then, but one article of faith taught by the Church,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “ is enough to destroy faith, as one mortal sin is enough to destroy charity ; for the virtue of faith does not consist in merely adhering to the Holy Scriptures, and in revering them as the word of God ; it consists principally in submitting our intellect and will to the divine authority of the true Church charged by Jesus Christ to expound them. ‘ I would not believe the Holy Scriptures,’ says St. Augustine, ‘ were it not for the divine authority of the Church.’ He, therefore, who despises and rejects this authority cannot have true faith. If he admits some supernatural truths, they are but simple opinions, as he makes them (the truths) depend on his private judgment. It is absurd for him to say that he believes in Jesus Christ. To believe in a man is to give our full assent to his word and to all he teaches. True

faith, therefore, is absolute belief in Jesus Christ and in all he taught. Hence, he who does not adhere to all that Jesus Christ has prescribed for our salvation, has no more the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of his Church than the pagans, Jews and Turks have. 'He is,' says Jesus Christ, 'but a heathen, and a publican.' So there is no faith outside of the true Church; and as faith is the beginning of salvation, the foundation and source of justification, and is found only in the true Church, it is clear that there is no salvation outside of the true Church." (See Predestination in my work, on Grace and Sacr.)

So great is the importance of this truth that the holy Catholic Church has placed it as the first article of the profession of faith which converts have to make when about to be received into the church. This truth or article of faith reads as follows: "I, N. N., having before my eyes the holy Gospels which I touch with my hand, and *knowing that no one can be saved without that faith which the Holy, Catholic Apostolic Roman Church holds, believes and teaches, against which I grieve that I have greatly erred,*" etc.

"How grateful, then," says St. Alphonsus, "ought we to be to God for the gift of the true faith. How great is not the number of infidels and heretics! The world is full of them, and they all will be condemned, except infants who die after baptism." (Catech. Sect. i., 10, 19.) "Our rule of faith, therefore," says St. Alphonsus, "is this: 'My God, because thou, who art the infallible truth, hast revealed to the Church the truths of faith, I believe all that the Church proposes to my belief.'" (Catech. Sect. i, 6.) Such is the faith which God prescribes in the first commandment. It is only by such faith that he is truly honored and wor-

shipped, for by such faith we acknowledge him as the sovereign Being of infinite perfections, made known to us by revelation, and as the sovereign Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

It is never allowed, under any circumstances whatever, to deny this faith; for our dear Lord says: "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt., x., 33.) From this, however, it does not follow that we are bound always to make an open profession of our faith before every body. We are obliged to profess our faith openly when God's honor, or our own, or our neighbor's good requires us to do so. Hence we are bound to make an open profession of our faith when interrogated by tyrants and persecutors of the church: or when wicked men, by our silence, would be encouraged in blaspheming our holy faith; or when we know that our neighbor would be in danger of denying the faith or committing any grievous sin if we were not to profess our faith openly; or when we are obliged to choose between doing something contrary to our conscience and making an open profession of our faith—"Every one that shall confess me before men," says our Lord "I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt., x., 32.)

Theodosia had an only son, named Neanias. When he reached his 20th year Theodosia was eager to advance his interests. On this account she presented him to the emperor Diocletian. To gain the favor of the emperor, Theodosia told him, that in spite of all her efforts, her husband died a Christian, but that she had carefully trained up her son for the service of the emperor and the gods.

Diocletian, being a deadly enemy of the Christians, was

pleased to hear that Theodosia had brought up her son a pagan. He immediately placed Neanias at the head of a troop of soldiers, and sent him to Alexandria, with orders to ferret out the Christians and put them to death.

Theodosia was overjoyed and Neanias, who had learned from his mother to hate Christians, resolved to distinguish himself by his zeal against them, and thus advance in the esteem of the emperor.

He set out with his troops, breathing fire and slaughter,—when—O wonderful mercy of God!—as he neared the city of Apamea, he heard an interior voice saying to him: “O Neanias! whither art you going?” At the same time he beheld a cross in the air before him. Startled by what he saw and heard, he halted instantly. In a moment a brilliant flood of light illumined his soul. He called to mind all that his father had told him of the religion of Jesus Christ. At that moment, touched by the grace of God, he resolved to become a Christian.

Instead of attacking the Christians he turned his arms against the bands of marauders who infested the country, and completely routed them. He then repaired to Alexandria, where he was fully instructed in the faith.

On his return, his mother, not knowing that he had become a Christian, was transported with joy at his great victories. “Yes, mother,” answered Neanias, “I have gained a victory far more glorious than all these. I have conquered myself. With the grace of God I have become a Christian! “What! my son!”—cried Theodosia, in amazement, “you a Christian! surely you are jesting.”—“No,” replied Neanias, “I am in earnest.” Then drawing from his bosom a cross that he wore, he showed it to her and kissed it reverently. He then broke to pieces all the idols that were in the house.

At the sight of this Theodosia became so enraged that, scarcely knowing what she was doing, she rushed to the emperor and denounced her own son as a Christian, an enemy of the gods.

Diocletian was surprised at this news. He sent for Neanias, spoke kindly to him at first, then threatened him with the most terrible torments. Neanias remained firm. Diocletian was enraged, and ordered him to be put to torture. At first Neanias was cruelly beaten with rods, then cast into prison, to give him time for reflection.

On the following day as Neanias remained firm he, with a number of other Christians, was put to the most frightful tortures. Theodosia was present with a number of ladies of rank. She hoped that her son, overcome by his sufferings, would at length renounce the Christian faith, which she hated so intensely. She noticed, however, that, on the contrary, her son as well as the other martyrs, rejoiced in all their sufferings.

Suddenly, as she sat there witnessing the wonderful constancy of the martyrs, the grace of God touched her proud heart. She saw in that moment all the enormity of the unnatural crime she had committed in giving up her own son to be tortured. She was filled with shame and remorse. Enlightened by God; she cried out in a loud voice: "I am a Christian!"

She was denounced to the emperor, and led to the same prison to which her son had just been brought back. Neanias was surprised to see his mother enter the prison, but how great was his joy when she informed him that she, too, had become a Christian, and that with God's grace she was resolved to die for the faith. After many useless efforts to induce them to apostatize, mother and son had at length the happiness to die for the faith!

We are, moreover, obliged to make internal acts of faith :

1. As soon as we come to the use of reason, and are sufficiently instructed in the truths of faith.

2. Whenever faith is a necessary disposition for the performance of a certain duty, for instance, when we are about to receive a sacrament.

3. Whenever we cannot overcome a certain temptation unless we make an act of faith.

4. As we are bound to increase in the virtue of faith, and as every virtue is nourished and increased by frequent acts of virtue, we are obliged to make frequent acts of faith in the course of our life. Hence it is a mortal sin not to comply with this duty for a considerable time.

However, the obligation of making acts of faith is fulfilled as often as we pray, or hear Mass, or perform other religious duties with proper dispositions.

5. Lastly, we are obliged to make acts of faith when we are in danger of death.

But here a non-Catholic may object :

Will you send to hell all those who do not think as you do ?

The Catholic Church sends no one to hell. No one is condemned to the torments of hell, except through his own fault. God gives sufficient grace to all men, heathens as well as heretics. Those who abuse this grace will have to answer for it to God, and not to the Church.

You ask, if I wish to send every body to hell, and I ask, if you wish to send every body to heaven ?

If every one is to go to heaven, no matter what his creed may be, why did the Son of God come down from heaven and establish a Church ? Why did he abolish the Jewish Church, the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish

worship? Why did he declare in so solemn a manner that whoever did not believe in him would be damned?

God really desires the salvation of all, but he wishes that men should reach heaven in the way he has marked out. Now those who refuse to walk that way when they know it, clearly go astray. They walk with open eyes to their own destruction. He alone has an excuse who is invincibly ignorant. But he that is invincibly ignorant, and does what he can and as well as he knows, will receive the assistance of God, if he prays for it. God does not save the Turk by leaving him a Turk, or the idolater by leaving him an idolater, but he leads those who correspond with his grace to a knowledge of the truth, so that at last they are saved; but those who continually and deliberately refuse to correspond with his grace are lost. Hence, those that are damned go to hell, not because they do not think as we do, but because they refuse to cooperate with the lights and graces which God gives them. They are like a child born in a cave. If they follow the glimmer of light, it will lead them to perfect day; if they do not they will remain in darkness forever.

Who is then to blame? Whose fault is it? Remember it was God who created these souls, it was God who became man and died for them; and this same God tells us that they who refuse to believe will be condemned. Will any one pretend to tell me that he knows better than God himself, that he has more love for souls than God himself? What prayers have you offered up, what tears have you shed, what sacrifices have you made, what sufferings have you endured for the salvation of souls? Go, pray, watch, fast, do penance, pour out your heart's blood, give your life for the salvation of men, as Jesus Christ did, and then

perhaps I may listen to your theories, but until then I shall believe the words of Jesus Christ in spite of the shallow objections you may bring.

Ah! let us lay aside all foolish prejudice and blind passion. For God's sake, and for your soul's sake, consider the matter calmly. Supposing we admit for a moment that every one goes to heaven, no matter what his belief is. Why then there is no truth on earth. Jesus Christ has said; "He that will not believe will be condemned." Now, if the Son of God does not tell the truth, where shall we find it?" "He has the words of eternal life." St. Paul says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." These are the words of the Bible, the words of God. If I cannot believe God's word, I can believe no one—there is no truth on earth.

If all go to heaven, then there is no heaven. Suppose you had to live forever with your most deadly enemy, would you call such a life heaven? Suppose you had to live forever with drunkards, murderers, blasphemers, with devils, and the vilest scum of humanity, would you call such a life heaven? Now, as there is a heaven, so there must be a hell.

Now, St. Paul says that heretics, adulterers, and so on, "shall not possess the kingdom of God." And do not deceive yourself with the vain imagination that those who die in mortal sin, will wander from star to star and be able to purify themselves and amend in the next world. The terrible words of Jesus Christ are too plain. "Wherever the tree falleth, there it shall lie."

I ask, what excuse can they have who reject the known truth in order to follow the corrupt desires of their heart, who hate the light because their works are evil; who

stifle the voice of their conscience, and then pretend that no matter what a man believes he will be saved anyhow. Of course God must change his divine decrees, must break all his divine promises, must cease to be just and holy, in a word, he must cease to be God, in order not to lose *their* company, and who are they? Unbelievers, perjurers, adulterers, murderers—sinners of every die. And yet they imagine that heaven cannot be happy without *their* company?

“Ah! You Catholics,” says a non-Catholic, “are intolerant; you have no charity.” Before answering this objection, I would ask: “Who are those who accuse the Catholic Church of intolerance? Why of course, first of all, it is charitable—tolerant England—Aye, England with her penal code, that code inspired by devils and written in human gore. Ha! ask Ireland, bleeding, manacled Ireland, standing by her ruined shrines, her red graves, her coffinless trenches, and they will tell you of England’s wonderful toleration. Go, ask the exiled children of Ireland; track them to the uttermost ends of the earth; go, ask the winds that have so often heard their sighs and their prayers; go, ask the earth that has so often drunk in their tears and their blood; go, ask the ocean that has so often witnessed their death-struggle while flying from chains and slavery; go to the dreary shores of the icy north; go to the burning sands of the torrid south, and the bleached and scattered bones of Ireland’s sons and daughters will tell you of England’s wonderful toleration.

Or is it, perhaps, New England, with her Blue Laws, her cropping and branding, and witch burning. Or is it perhaps the faithful followers of Calvin and Knox, so well known for their *burning* zeal. The hypocrites! to talk of

toleration with their penal laws, with their bloody persecution directed against those brave and noble souls that had the courage to remain faithful to the religion of their forefathers, the religion of the civilized world, the holy church of Jesus Christ. Before they can talk of toleration, let them first blot out of history the names of that lustful bluebeard, Henry VIII., the name of that heartless virago, Queen Bess, the names of Cromwell and Knox. Before they can talk of toleration, let them first restore the sacked and plundered churches and abbeys of Ireland; let them call up from their graves the thousands that were massacred, that were deliberately starved to death, that were condemned to a long weary life of exile, far away from their beloved land.

Look at the various protestant countries of Europe. See they practise that toleration which they preach so glibly. Go to Norway, Sweden and Denmark. There, after exterminating the Catholic religion with fire and sword, they still exclude Catholicity by the most tyrannical laws.

Look at Germany at the present day. Their religious are exiled, their property is seized, their priests and bishops are imprisoned.

Before protestants can talk of toleration, let them first destroy the history of the past three hundred years, let them destroy the very facts that exist even to this day.

You blame the Catholics; you call them intolerant, because they defend their holy faith, because they love it more than their life.

Now, suppose some new sectarian should arise and teach that God requires human sacrifices. Suppose, in fact, he kidnapped your child, killed it, and poured its

blood on the altar as an agreeable sacrifice to God. Would you tolerate such a monster, would you approve of his bloody rites? Certainly not. And why not? Suppose his conscience tells him that such sacrifices are pleasing to God, would you hinder a man from following the dictates of his conscience? Did not the ancient, do not even modern heathens offer up human sacrifices?

But you will say, the interests of civilization, the interests of humanity require that such cruel and inhuman sacrifices should be abolished. Very well, granted. Then you admit that there are instances when it is your right and even your duty to be intolerant in matters of religion. Again, if you believe it a sacred duty to forbid human sacrifices, would you not at least allow the disciples of that inhuman religion to preach it every-where, to try to gain as many followers as possible, so that, by and by, they would be strong enough to defend themselves? Would you allow people to preach such inhuman doctrines? By no means. Very well, then there are false doctrines which no sane man can tolerate.

Let us take another case. Suppose some loved men and women would try to introduce publicly into your city the worship of Venus, as it existed among the heathens of old; suppose they would poison the minds of your own sister, your virtuous wife or your innocent children with the virus of their foul doctrines, would you tamely suffer them to go on? What, if they told you it was their religion? Would you hinder them from following the dictates of their conscience? Where then is your boasted toleration.

“Ah!” you answer, “such a religion is false; it is contrary to the laws of common decency.”

Will you not at least allow the worshippers of Venus to

preach their doctrines, to spread them by means of books and pictures and pamphlets ? to scatter these vile books and pictures in your own family, among your innocent children ? Never ! Very well, then there are false doctrines which you believe it your right and even your duty to suppress, even though some persons should on that account call you intolerant.

Again, suppose a number of fanatics should stand up once more, as they did in the days of the so-called reformation—and slay and burn and outrage all who dared oppose them, would you tolerate this new religion ? But suppose they should declare that they were called by the Lord, that they were bound in conscience to act thus, that, in a word, it was their religion, would you tolerate them ? Then where is all your boasted toleration. Then there are false principles, which every honest man is bound in conscience to oppose to the best of his power. That is precisely what we Catholics maintain.

We know, with infallible certainty, that the Catholic religion is the only true one, that the greatest misfortune that can ever befall a man is to lose the true faith ; “ for without faith it is impossible to please God,” impossible to go to heaven. We are ready to sacrifice our health, our possessions, yea, our life itself, rather than give up our holy faith. Can you wonder then that we are jealous of this faith, that we can tamely suffer any one to rob us or our children of that which is dearer to us than life ? To tolerate falsehood quietly, a man must be without heart and without reason. It is in the very nature of every honest man when he has the truth, to guard it with jealous watchfulness, and to repel with indignation every admixture of falsehood.

Look at the teacher of mathematics, when he discovers an error in the calculation of his pupils, does he not condemn it—is he not intolerant ?

Look at the musician, the leader of a choir—is he not indignant when some one sings flat or out of time ?

Look at the lawyer who has carefully studied the laws and is eloquently pleading his case. He quotes a certain law. He has read it even that very morning. Suppose you tell him that no such law ever existed. Is he not indignant at your denial ? Is not he jealous of what he knows to be the truth ?

Look at that experienced physician. Try if you can to make him believe that unnatural sins will not hurt the nervous system. You may as well try to convince him that poison will not kill.

Every honest man guards the truth with the most jealous care, and you will blame the Catholics for jealously guarding the highest truth—that truth which God himself has revealed—that truth upon which depends our whole happiness here and hereafter ?

Do not the laws of every civilized land condemn those who sell poison indiscriminately, and can you blame the Church for condemning those who poison the souls of their fellow-men, who rob them of their holy faith, who deprive them of the means of salvation, of the assistance of God's grace, who rob them even in their dying hour of the consolations of religion, of even the hope of heaven ? Is not the Church right in condemning those murderers of souls ?

“ But charity requires at least a little toleration. ”

Well then, what is charity ? Charity means certainly to wish well to your neighbor. Now the true faith is the greatest blessing that man can possess in this life, and the

lack of faith is the greatest misfortune that can befall one. "For without faith it is impossible to please God."

What kind of charity then is it to rob a man of his greatest treasure—his holy faith? And you will assert that to try to save a man from such a misfortune is to be without charity. What! the physician that saves the life of your wife or child, the lawyer that saves your property and your good name—are they uncharitable? To warn a poor, blind man that is walking on the brink of a frightful precipice—even to seize him and draw him back—is that uncharitable? Now is not he that saves a man's soul—his immortal life, a far greater benefactor? The honor we owe to the God of truth, and the love we bear our neighbor, alike oblige us to defend our holy faith by every lawful means in our power.

The various sects and secret societies are ever prating about toleration, why then do they not practise what they preach? Why are Catholics even to this day forbidden to hold office in New Hampshire? Why is the Catholic priest forbidden to visit the prisons and hospitals in so many parts of the United States? Why do they tax Catholics to support their godless schools? Why do they kidnap thousands of our children every year and sell them out West? Why do they preach continually against the Catholic Church? Why do they spread broadcast so many books and pamphlets, filled with the most infamous calumnies of our holy Church?

And should we Catholics, ever dare to defend our holy faith against such atrocious calumnies, these hypocrites instantly clasp their hands and turn up the whites of their eyes in holy horror, and accuse us of bigotry, intolerance, want of charity, and so on! With what name should we brand those who are guilty of such conduct?

16. Which are the sins against faith ?

The sins against faith are: infidelity, heresy, apostasy, indifference to faith, wilful doubt of any article of faith, and liberalism.

GETHSEMANI ABBEY,
GETHSEMANI, P. O. KY.

17. What is infidelity.

Infidelity is the want of the true faith in an unbaptized person.

Those who do not believe what God has revealed are called infidels. Infidel means one who has no faith. Hence unbelievers, and all those who reject any article of the Catholic faith, are, in a certain sense, infidels.

The word "infidel," however, is especially applied to those who are not baptized, and who do not believe in God, or in Jesus Christ, his Son.

Children who are not baptized, idolaters and pagans who do not adore the one true God, but pay divine honor to idols, are called infidels.

Turks are also infidels, for, though believing in one God, they have no belief in Jesus Christ. They pay honor to a false prophet, called Mahomet, from whom they take the name of Mahometans. They distinguish themselves from others by the name of Mussulman, which, in the Turkish language, means a true believer.

There are many persons who never had an opportunity of knowing the true religion, or of becoming aware of the obligation of seeking and embracing it. These persons are called *negative* infidels, and the want of the true religion in these persons is called *negative infidelity*. This kind of infidelity is no sin, for the Church has condemned the proposition of Baius :

"Merely negative infidelity in those to whom Jesus

Christ has not been made known, is a sin." Hence, all those who live in this kind of infidelity are not accountable for the want of the true faith. It is for this reason that our Lord said: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned, but now they have no excuse for their sin." (John, xv., 22.)

The Christian revelation is a positive law. Now, the nature of a positive law is not to be binding until it has been made known. Hence, if negative infidels are condemned, they are not condemned on account of their infidelity, but on account of their sins, says St. Thomas. "For whosoever have sinned without the law," says St. Paul, "shall perish without the law." (Rom., ii., 12.)

Almighty God has impressed upon man from the beginning, the principles of right and wrong or the law of nature, and when man is about to violate this law, his conscience warns him not to do so, and if, in spite of this warning, he violates the natural law, he makes himself guilty and damnable in the sight of God. He will be punished in proportion to his guilt.

But if a *negative* infidel is faithful in obeying the voice of his conscience, God will have pity on him before he dies; for, says St. Thomas Aquinas, "if any one was brought up in the wilderness or among brute beasts, and if he followed the law of nature to desire what is good, and to avoid what is wicked, we should certainly believe either that God, by an inward inspiration, would reveal to him what he should believe, or would send some one to preach the faith to him, as he sent Peter to Cornelius." (See what I have said on this subject in my work, "Grace and the Sacraments," article on Predestination, p. 117-154.)

There are other persons to whom the truths of the true

religion have been sufficiently made known, so as to be inexcusable before God, like many of the Jews of whom our Lord said that they had no excuse for their sins, because he had spoken to them. Having received sufficient light to know the truth, or at least to understand the danger of their position, and the obligation of making diligent inquires to ascertain and embrace the truth, it is evident that such people are accountable to God, especially if they voluntarily deny the truth and obstinately resist it. The want of faith in these people is called, *positive infidelity*.

Now, "positive infidelity, being wilful obstinacy, palpable contradiction, and public contempt of divine revelation and of the precepts of the Gospel, is one of the most grievous sins in the sight of God and of his holy Church," says St. Thomas Aquinas. To understand this truth, we have but to remember what mortal sin is.

Mortal sin is a deviation from virtue and divine law. The most heinous sin, therefore, is that which separates man from God more than any other. Now, no sin causes a greater separation from God than that of positive infidelity. When the intellect is in error and abandons the knowledge of God, the will follows it and increases in malice in proportion as the intellect turns away from the path of truth, justice and charity. Each step that such a man takes in the darkness of infidelity, increases the distance that separates him from God. A return from that dangerous course is very difficult, for when the intellect is in error and the will filled with malice and depravity, all the bonds capable of uniting man to God are torn asunder.

Let us take a good look at an infidel and see what kind of man he is. In our day and country it has become fash-

ionable for a large number of men to have no religion, and even to boast of having none. To have no religion is a great crime, but to boast of having none is the height of folly. The man without religion is a kind of monster, with the intelligence of a man and the cruelty and instincts of a beast. His religion is to disregard good principles; to do away, not only with all revealed religion, but even with the law of nature; to hold iniquity in veneration; to practise fraud, theft, and robbery almost as a common trade; to be regardless of parents and of all divinely constituted authority; to create confusion, not only in religion, but also in government and in the family circle; to contribute towards the increase of the number of apostates, and make of these apostates members of such secret societies as aim at the overthrow of governments, of all order, and of the Christian religion itself.

The man without religion says: "There is no God." He says so "in his heart," says Holy Writ; he says not so in his head, because he knows better. There are moments when, in spite of himself, he returns to better sentiments. Let him be in imminent danger of death or of a considerable loss of fortune, and how quickly, on such occasions, he lays aside the mask of infidelity! He straightway makes his profession of faith in an Almighty God; he cries out: "Lord, I am perishing; Lord! have mercy on me."

The famous Volney was once on a voyage with some of his friends, off the coast of Maryland. All at once a great storm arose, and the little bark, which bore the flower of the unbelievers of both hemispheres, appeared twenty times on the point of being lost. In this imminent danger every one began to pray. M. de Volney himself snatched a rosary from a good woman near him, and began

to recite Hail Marys with edifying fervor, neither did he cease till the danger was over. When the storm had passed, some one said to him in a tone of good-natured raillery: "My dear sir, it seems to me that you were praying just now. To whom did you address yourself, since you maintain that there is no God?" "Ah! my friend," replied the philosopher, all ashamed, "one can be a sceptic in his study, but not at sea in a storm." (Noel, *Catech de Rodez*, i., 73.)

A certain innkeeper had learned, in bad company, all sorts of impiety. In his wickedness he went even so far as to say that he did not believe in God. One night he was roused by the cry of "Fire! fire!" His house was on fire. No sooner had he perceived the dreadful havoc going on than he cried with clasped hands: "My God! O my God! God Almighty! God of grace and mercy! have pity on me and help me!" Here he was suddenly stopped by one of his neighbors: "How! wretch, you have been denying and blaspheming God all the evening, and you would have him come now to your assistance!" (Schmid and Belet, *Cat. Hist.* i., 43.)

Colonel Ethan Allen, the hero of Ticønderago, was an atheist and unbeliever. On the 12th of November, 1827, his daughter fell dangerously ill. The poor girl appeared to have but a few moments to live. She sent for her father to her bedside, and, taking him by his hand, faintly addressed him in these words: "My dear father, I am going to die very soon; tell me seriously, then, I entreat you, whether I am to believe what you have so often told me—that there is neither God, nor heaven nor hell, or what I learned in the catechism which my mother taught me?" The father was thunderstruck; he remained silent for

some moments, with his eyes fixed on his expiring daughter. His heart appeared to be torn by some violent struggle. At length he approached the bed, and said in a choking voice: "My child, my dear child, believe only what your mother taught!" The astonishment of the unbelievers who heard him may easily be imagined. One of them, who had long before abjured his religion, being asked what he thought, replied that it was more pleasant to live according to his new religion, but it was better to die in the old. (Schmid and Belet *Cat. Hist.* ii., 47.)

From these examples it is evident that the mouth of the infidel belies his own heart.

There is still another proof to show that the infidel does not believe what he says. Why is it that he makes his impious doctrines the subject of conversation on every occasion? It is, of course, first to communicate his devilish principles to others, and make them as bad as he himself is; but this is not the only reason. The good Catholic seldom speaks of his religion; he feels assured, by the grace of God, that his religion is the only true one, and that he will be saved if he lives up to it. Such is not the case with the infidel; he is constantly tormented in his soul. "There is no peace, no happiness for the impious," says Holy Scripture. (Isaias, xlvi., 22.) He tries to quiet the fears of his soul, the remorse of his conscience; so he communicates to others, on every occasion, his perverse principles, hoping to meet with some of his fellow-men who may approve of his impious views, that he thus may find some relief for his interior torments. He resembles a timid man who is obliged to travel during a dark night, and who begins to sing and shout in order to keep away fear. The infidel is a sort of night traveller; he travels in the horrible dark-

ness of his impiety. His interior conviction tells him that there is a God, who will certainly punish him in the most frightful manner. This fills him with great fear, and makes him extremely unhappy every moment of his life; he cannot bear the sight of a Catholic Church, of a Catholic procession, of an image of our Lord, of a picture of a saint, of a prayer-book, of a good Catholic, of a priest—in a word, he cannot bear anything that reminds him of God, of religion, of his own guilt and impiety; so, on every occasion, he cries out against faith in God, in all that God has revealed and proposes to us for our belief by the holy Catholic Church. What is the object of his impious cries? It is to deafen, to keep down, in some measure, the clamory of his conscience. Our hand will involuntarily touch that part of the body where we feel pain; in like manner, the tongue of the infidel touches, on all occasions, involuntarily, as it were, upon all those truths of our holy religion which inspire him with fear of the judgments of Almighty God. He feels but too keenly that he cannot do away with God and his sacred religion by denying his existence.

The man without religion must necessarily lose the esteem and confidence of his follow-men. What confidence can be placed in a man who has no religion, and consequently no knowledge of his duties? What confidence can you place in a man who never feels himself bound by any obligation of conscience, who has no higher motive to direct him than his self-love, his own interests? The pagan Roman, though enlightened only by reason, had yet virtue enough to say: "I live not for *myself*, but for the republic;" but the infidel's motto is: "I live for myself; I care for no one but myself." How can such a man

reconcile "poverty and wealth," "labor and ease," "sickness and health," "adversity and prosperity," "rich and poor," "obedience and authority," "liberty and law," etc., etc. ? All these are enigmas to him, or, if he affects to understand them at all, he thinks they arise from bad management or bad government. He will be a tyrant or a slave, a glutton or a miser; a fanatic or a libertine, a thief or a highway robber, as circumstances may influence him. Think you that the common "fall-back" on the principle of self-interest—well or ill understood—will ever restrain such a one from doing any act of impulse or indulgence, provided he thinks it can be safely done ? He will look on life as a game of address or force, in which the best man is he who carries off the prize.

He will look upon power as belonging of right to the strongest ; the weak, or those who differ from him in opinion, he will treat with contempt and cruelty, and will think that they have no rights which he is bound to respect. In power such a man will be arbitrary and cruel ; out of power he will be faithless, hypocritical, and subservient. Trust him with authority, he will abuse it ; trust him with money, he will steal it ; trust him with your confidence, and he will betray it. Such a man—pagan and unprincipled as he is—may nevertheless affect, when it suits his purpose, great religious zeal and purity. He will talk of *Philanthropy* and *Humanity*, have great compassion, perhaps, for a dray-horse, and give the cold shoulder to the houseless pauper or orphan.

The heart of such a man is cold, insincere, destitute of every tender chord for a tender vibration, of every particle of right or just feeling or principle that can be touched ; on the contrary, it is roused to rage, revenge,

and falsehood if interfered with. How is such a heart to be touched or moved, or placed under such influences as could move it? Indeed, it would require a miracle. Nay, even a miracle would fail to make a salutary impression upon such a heart. A French infidel declared that, should he be told that the most remarkable miracle was occurring close by his house, he would not move a step out of his way to see it. Pride never surrenders; it prefers rather to take an illogical position than to bow even to the authority of reason. Furious, beside itself, and absurd, it revolts against evidence. To all reasoning, to undeniable evidence, the infidel—the man without religion—opposes his own will: “Such is my determination.” It is sweet to him to be stronger single-handed than common sense, stronger than miracles, stronger even than God who manifests himself by them.

Such a man may be called civilized, but he is only an *accomplished barbarian*. His head and hands are instructed, his heart, and low passions, and appetites unbridled and untamed.

Collot d’Herbois played the most execrable part during the French Revolution. Having become a representative of the people under the Reign of Terror, he had the Lyonesse massacred in hundreds. The very accomplices of his crimes regarded him as a man so dangerous that they thought it expedient to exclude him from society, by banishing him to the deserts of Guiana. Transported to that tropical country, he looked upon himself as the most miserable of men. “I am punished,” he would sometimes exclaim; “the abandonment in which I find myself is a hell.” Being attacked by a malignant fever, he was to be taken to Cayenne. The negroes charged with this commission threw

him on the public road with his face turned to the scorching sun. They said in their own language: "We will not carry that murderer of religion and of men." "What is the matter with you?" asked the doctor, Guysonf, when he arrived. "I have a burning fever and perspiration." "I believe it; you are sweating crime." He called on God and the Blessed Virgin to assist him. A soldier, to whom he had preached irreligion, asked him why he invoked God and the Blessed Virgin—he who mocked them some months before. "Ah! my friend," said he, "my mouth then belied my heart." He then cried out: "O my God, my God! can I yet hope for pardon? Send me a consoler, send me a priest, to turn mine eyes away from the furnace that consumes me. My God, give me peace!" The spectacle of his last moments was so frightful that no one could remain near him. Whilst they were seeking a priest he expired, on the 7th of June, 1796, his eyes half open, his hands clenched, his mouth full of blood and froth. His burial was so neglected that the negro grave-diggers only half covered him, and his body became the food for swine and birds of prey.—Debussi, *Nouveau Mois de Marie*, 251.

The man without religion is a slave to the most degrading superstition. Instead of worshipping the true, free, living God, who governs all things by His Providence, he bows before the horrid phantom of blind chance or inexorable destiny. He is a man who obstinately refuses to believe the most solidly established facts in favor of religion, and yet, with blind credulity, greedily swallows the most absurd falsehoods uttered against religion. He is a man whose reason has fled, and whose passions speak, object, and decide in the name of reason. He is sunk in the gross-

est ignorance regarding religion. He blasphemes what he does not understand. He rails at the doctrines of the Church, without knowing really what her doctrines are. He sneers at the doctrines and practices of religion because he cannot refute them. He speaks with the utmost gravity of the fine arts, the fashions, and matters the most trivial, while he turns the most sacred subjects into ridicule. In the midst of his own circle of fops and silly women, he utters his shallow conceits with all the pompous assurance of a pedant.

The man without religion is a dishonest plagiarist, who copies from Catholic writers all the objections made against the Church by the infidels of former times or by modern heretics ; but he takes good care to omit all the excellent answers and complete refutations which are contained in those very writings. His object is not to seek the truth, but to propagate falsehood.

The man without religion often pretends to be an infidel, in order to appear fashionable. He is usually conceited, obstinate, puffed up with pride, a great talker, always shallow and fickle, skipping from one subject to another without thoroughly examining any. At one moment he is a deist, at another a materialist, then he is a sceptic, and again an atheist, always changing his views, but always a slave of his passions, always an enemy of Christ.

The man without religion often praises all religions—he is a true knave. He says : “If I were to choose my religion, I would become a Catholic ; for it is the most reasonable of all religions.” But in his heart he despises all religion ; he scrapes together all the wicked and absurd calumnies he can find against the Church. He falsely accuses her of teaching monstrous doctrines which she has

always abhorred and condemned, and he displays his ingenuity by combating those monstrous doctrines which he himself has invented, or copied from authors as dishonest as himself. The infidel is a monster without faith, without law, without religion, without God.

There are many who call themselves "free-thinkers"—many who reject all revealed religion—merely out of puerile vanity. They affect singularity in order to attract notice, to make people believe that they are strong-minded, that they are independent. Poor, deluded slaves of human respect! They affect singularity in order to attract notice, and they forget that there is another class of people in the world also noted for singularity; in fact, they are so singular that they have to be shut up for safe-keeping in a mad-house.

What is the difference between an infidel and a madman?

The only difference is that the madness of the infidel is wilful, while the madness of the poor lunatic is entirely involuntary. The one arouses our compassion, while the other excites our contempt and just indignation.

The man without religion is a slave of the most shameful passions. What virtue can that man have who believes that whatever he desires is lawful; who designates the the most shameful crimes by the name of innocent pleasures? What virtue can that man have who knows no other law than his passions; who believes that God regards with equal eye, truth and falsehood, vice and virtue? He may indeed practise some natural virtues, but these virtues are, in general, only exterior. They are practised merely out of human respect; they do not come from the heart. But the seat of true virtue is in the heart, and not in the exterior; he that acts merely to please man, and

not to please God, has no real virtue. What are the poor without religion? They are unable to control their passions, or to bear their hard lot. They see wealth around them, and, being without religion, they see no reason why that wealth should not be divided amongst them. Why should they starve, while their neighbors roll in splendor and luxury? They know their power, and, not having the soothing influence of religion to restrain them, they use their power. They have done so in France and elsewhere; and if they do not always succeed in producing revolution and anarchy, it is only the bayonet that prevents them. Is not the man who has said, "There is no God," on the point of also saying, "Property is robbery," and "Lust is lawful?"

What are children without religion to their parents? They are the greatest misfortune and the greatest curse that can come to them.

History informs us that Dion, the philosopher, gave a sharp reproof to Dionysius, the tyrant, on account of his cruelty. Dionysius felt highly offended, and resolved to avenge himself on Dion; so he took the son of Dion prisoner—not, indeed, for the purpose of killing him, but of giving him up into the hands of a godless teacher. After the young man had been long enough under this teacher to learn from him everything that was bad and impious, Dionysius sent him back to his father. Now what object had the tyrant in acting thus? He foresaw that this corrupted son, by his impious conduct during his whole lifetime, would cause his father constant grief and sorrow, so much so that he would be for him a lifelong affliction and curse. This, the tyrant thought, was the longest and greatest revenge he could take on Dion for having censured his conduct.

Indeed, there is no father, there is no mother, who is not thoroughly convinced of the truth that a child without religion is the greatest affliction that can befall parents. This truth needs no illustration.

What is the man of learning without religion ? He is more destructive than any army of savage soldiers. His science will prove more fatal than the sword in the hands of unprincipled men ; it will prove more of a demon than a God. The arsenal of his mind is stored with weapons to sap alike the altar and the throne ; to carry on a war of extermination against every holy principle, against the welfare and the very existence of society ; to spread among the people the worst of religions—the *no-religion*, the religion which pleases most hardened adulterers and criminals, the religion of irrational animals. The man of learning without religion will do all in his power to preach licentiousness, cruelty, and vice ; the substitution of the harlotry of the passions for the calm and elevating influences of reason and religion ; to bring about a generation without belief in God and immortality, free from all regard for the invisible—a generation that looks upon this life as their only life, this earth as their only home, and the promotion of their earthly interests and enjoyments as their only end ; a generation that looks upon religion, marriage, or family and private property as the greatest enemies to worldly happiness ; a generation that substitutes science of this world for religion, a community of goods for private property, a community of wives for the private family ; in other words, a generation that substitutes the devil for God, hell for heaven, sin and vice for virtue and holiness of life.

Witness the current literature of the day, which is pene-

trated with the spirit of licentiousness, from the pretentious quarterly to the arrogant and flippant daily newspaper, and the weekly and monthly publications, which are mostly heathen or maudlin. They express and inculcate, on the one hand, stoical, cold, and polished pride of mere intellect, or, on the other, empty and wretched sentimentality, irreligious and impious principles. Some employ the skill of the engraver to caricature the institutions and offices of the Christian religion, and others to exhibit the grossest forms of vice and the most distressing scenes of crime and suffering. The illustrated press has become to us what the amphitheatre was to the Romans when men were slain, women were outraged, and Christians given to the lions to please a degenerate populace.

Who were the leaders in the work of destruction and wholesale butchery in the Reign of Terror? The nurslings of lyceums in which the chaotic principles of the "philosophers" were proclaimed as oracles of truth.

Who are those turbulent revolutionists who always long to erect the guillotine? And who are those secret conspirators and their myrmidon partisans who have sworn to unify Italy or lay it in ruins? Men who were taught to scout the idea of a God and rail at religion, to consider Christianity as a thing of the past; men who revel in wild chimeras by night, and seek to realize their mad dreams by day.

What is the physician without religion? He peoples the grave-yards, murders helpless innocents, and makes many of his patients the objects of his brutal lust. What does he care, provided his purse swells and his brutal passion is gratified?

A gentleman of one of the smaller towns of Connecticut writes to the *Independent* as follows:

“I dare not tell you what I know (and the information has been given me unsolicited) in reference to the horrid practise of the crime of infanticide in the land. I do not believe there is a village in the New England States but this crime is practised in more or less. There are men who make it their business, with medicine and instruments, to carry on this slaughter. And even physicians in good and regular standing in the Church have practised it. Men are making here, in this highly moral State, three thousand and four thousand dollars a year, in the small towns alone, at this business.”

Trustworthy physicians assure us that there are not less than sixty ghouls in New York City who grow rich by killing infants. The number has been stated at six times sixty. The author of the book *Satan in Society* writes on pages 130, 131, as follows: “A medical writer of some note published, in 1861, a pamphlet, in which he declared himself the hero of three hundred abortions. He admits, in a work of his, that he only found abortion necessary to save the life of the mother in four instances, thus publicly confessing that in an immense number of cases he has performed the operation on other grounds; and yet, in the face of all this self-accusation, this rascal walks unhung.” These infidel and immoral physicians advertise publicly, offering their services to enable people, as they say, “to enjoy the pleasures of marriage without the burden.” They prepare, and even publicly sell everywhere, the drugs and implements for committing such murders of the helpless innocent. But who are the patients of those infidel physicians, the victims of these ghouls? They come from the low and vicious circles of society. Many of them, shocking to say, are under the age of fifteen.

“How is all this possible?” exclaims the good Christian, “Is not affection for their offspring a quality possessed even by all animals, with rarely an exception? Few, indeed, of the millions of the animal creation seek to destroy their own offspring after birth, or to so neglect them as to leave them liable to destruction by other bodies or forces. How, then, can a human intelligence, a mother, though she be illegitimate, be cruel enough to adopt the most revolting and barbarous means of committing that most unnatural of crimes, the crime of infanticide?”

Such a crime is indeed most shocking for the truly Christian woman. But since thousands of young ladies nowadays are brought up without religion, and are real infidels, we need not wonder at the fact that they are a kind of monster, with the intelligence of a man and the cruelty and instincts of a beast. In 1865, Dr. Morse Stewart, of Detroit, Mich., could not help declaring that “among married persons the practice of destroying the legitimate results of matrimony had become so extensive that people of high repute not only commit this crime, but do not even blush to speak boastfully among their intimates of the deed and the means of accomplishing it.” “Several hundreds of Protestant women,” says Dr. Storer of Boston, “have personally acknowledged to us their guilt, against whom only seven Catholics; and of these we found, upon further enquiry, that all but two were only nominally so, not going to confession. There can be no doubt that Romish ordinance, flanked on the one hand by the confessional, and by denouncement and excommunication on the other, has saved to the world thousands of infant lives.”—*Criminal Abortion*, p. 74.

Ah! if God is despised, his laws will be hated and vio-

lated ; man will see only his own interests ; his neighbor's property will only whet his appetite ; his neighbor's life will only be a secondary consideration ; he would, according to his creed, be a fool not to shed blood when his interest requires it ; his fellow-men become imbued with his principles—anarchy succeeds subordination—vice takes the place of virtue—what was sacred is profaned—what was honorable becomes disgraceful—might becomes right—treaties are waste paper—honor is an empty name—the most sacred obligations dwindle down into mere optional practices—youth despises age—wisdom is folly—subjection to authority is laughed at as a foolish dream—the moral code itself soon becomes little more than the bugbear of the weak minded—crowns are trampled under foot—thrones are overturned, nations steeped in blood, and republics swept from the face of the earth.

Witness the downfall of so many empires, kingdoms, dynasties, and republics of the past. Witness the great confusion in the governments of the present. Witness the nameless abominations of the Communists, Fourierites, and other such vile and degraded fraternities ; the cold-blooded murders and frightful suicides that fill so many domestic hearths with grief and shame ; the scarcely-concealed corruption of public and professional men ; the adroit peculation and wilful embezzlement of the public money ; those monopolizing speculations and voluntary insolvencies so ruinous to the community at large ; and, above all, those shocking atrocities so common in our country of unbelief—the legal dissolution of the matrimonial tie, and the wanton tampering of life in its very bud ; all these are humiliating facts sufficient to convince any impartial mind that if the devil were presented with a blank sheet

of paper, and bade to write on it the most fatal gift to man, he would simply write one word—*no religion*. Yes, it is the infidel, the man without religion, who makes war on God and His Christ, and says, with Lucifer, "*Non serviam*"—I will not serve thee. This daring rebel against God and his law wishes to have the innocent children of the Christian family, to teach them his false, devilish maxims; promises them, as Satan, his master did the Saviour, riches, and honors, and power, if they will but fall down and worship him. He is blind, and he attempts to lead; he is ignorant, and he offers to teach and direct his fellow-men. He will not receive the law, and he claims the right to give it. He arrogates the "higher law," and "would be as God." How incomprehensibly strange it is that there are so many men and women in our day who give ear to this temper instead of saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan," and "Thou art a liar and a cheat from the beginning."

Were we given to see a devil and the soul of an infidel at the same time, we should find the sight of the devil more bearable than that of the infidel; for St. James the Apostle tells us that "the devil believes and trembles." (Chap. ii., 19.)

As no one can attain life everlasting without knowing and living up to the true religion, it is evident that mankind can have no worse enemies than those who endeavor by word and deed to destroy the true knowledge of God and his holy religion. Alas! how numerous are these enemies in this country!

How hateful these enemies of God and of his holy religion are in the sight of the Lord may be seen from the frightful punishments which the Lord is accustomed to inflict upon them.

Let us look at a few instances, taken from the little book, *Fate of Infidelity*, by a converted infidel.

“You have undoubtedly heard of Blind Palmer, a professed infidel. After he had tried to lecture against Christ he lost his sight, and died suddenly in Philadelphia, in the forty-second year of his age. You will also have heard of the so-called Orange County Infidel Society. They held, among other tenets, that it was right to indulge in lasciviousness, and that it was right to regulate their conduct as their propensities and appetites should dictate; and as these principles were carried into practical operation by some families belonging to the association, in one instance a son held criminal intercourse with his mother, and publicly justified his conduct. The step-father, and husband to the mother who thus debased herself, boldly avowed that, in his opinion, it was morally right to hold such intercourse. The members of this impious society were visited by God in a remarkable manner. They all died, within five years, in some strange or unnatural manner. One of them was seized with a sudden and violent illness, and in his agony exclaimed: ‘My bowels are on fire—die I must,’ and his spirit passed away.

“Dr. H., another of the party, was found dead in his bed the next morning.

“D. D., a printer, fell into a fit, and died immediately, and three others were drowned within a few days.

“B. A., a lawyer, came to his death by starvation; and C. C., also educated for the bar, and a man of superior intellectual endowments, died of want, hunger and filth.

“Another, who had studied to be a preacher, suddenly disappeared, but at length his remains were found fast in

the ice, where he evidently had been for a long time, as the fowls of the air and the inhabitants of the deep had consumed the most of his flesh.

“Joshua Miller, notorious as a teacher of infidelity, was found upon a stolen horse, and was shot by Col. J. Woodhull. N. Miller, his brother, who was discovered one Sunday morning seated upon a log playing cards, was also shot.

“Benjamin Kelly was shot off his horse by a boy, the son of one Clark, who had been murdered by Kelly; his body remained upon the ground until his flesh had been consumed by birds.

“I. Smith committed suicide by stabbing himself while he was in prison for crime.

“W. Smith was shot by B. Thorpe and others for robbery.

“S. T. betrayed his own confidential friend for a few dollars; his friend was hung, and he was afterwards shot by D. Lancaster.

“I. V. was shot by a company of militia. I. D., in a drunken fit, was frozen to death.

“I. B., and I. Smith, and J. Vervellen, B. R., and one other individual, were hung for heinous crimes they had committed. N. B., W. T., and W. H. were drowned. C. C. hung himself. A. S. was struck with an axe, and bled to death.

“F. S. fell from his horse and was killed. W. Clark drank himself to death; he was eaten by the hogs before his bones were found, which were recognized by his clothing. J. A., Sr., died in the woods, his rum-jug by his side; he was not found until a dog brought home one of his legs, which was identified by his stocking; his bones had been picked by animals.

"S. C. hung himself, and another destroyed himself by taking laudanum. D. D. was hired for ten dollars to shoot a man, for which offence he died upon the gallows.

"The most of those who survived were either sent to the State prison, or were publicly whipped for crimes committed against the peace and dignity of the State."

This is a brief history of the Orange County "Liberals," as they called themselves.

The days of the infidel are counted. What a fearful thing is it for him to fall into the hands of God in the hour of death! He knows this truth, and because he knows it he dies in the fury of despair, and, as it were, in the anticipated torments of the suffering that awaits him in hell. Witness Voltaire, the famous infidel of France. He wished to make his confession at his last hour. But the priest of St. Sulpice was not able to go to his bedside, because the chamber-door was shut upon him. So Voltaire died without confession. He died in such a terrible paroxysm of fury and rage that the Marshal of Richelieu, who was present at his horrible agony, exclaimed: "Really, this sight is sickening; it is insupportable!" M. Tronchin, Voltaire's physician, says: "Figure to yourself the rage and fury of Orestes, and you'll still have but a feeble image of the fury of Voltaire in his last agony. It would be well if all the infidels of Paris were present. O the fine spectacle that would have met their eyes!" Thus is fulfilled in infidels what God says in holy Scripture: "I will laugh at the destruction of those who laughed at me during their life."

Witness Tom Paine. A short time before he died he sent for the Rev. Father Fenwick. So Father Fenwick went in company of Father Kohlman, to see the infidel in

his wretched condition. When they arrived at Paine's house, at Greenwich, his housekeeper came to the door and enquired whether they were the Catholic priests. "For," said she, "Mr. Paine has been so annoyed of late by ministers of different other denominations calling upon him, that he has left express orders with me to admit no one to-day but the clergymen of the Catholic Church." Upon assuring her that they were Catholic clergymen, she opened the door and invited them to sit down in the parlor. "Gentlemen," said she, "I really wish you may succeed with Mr. Paine; for he is laboring under great distress of mind, ever since he was informed by his physicians that he cannot possibly live, and must die shortly. He sent for you to-day because he was told that if any one could do him good you might. He is truly to be pitied. His cries, when he is left alone, are truly heartrending. 'O Lord! help me!' he will exclaim during his paroxysms of distress. 'God help, Jesus Christ help me!' repeating the same expressions without any, the least variation, in a tone of voice that would alarm the house. Sometimes he will say, 'O God! what have I done to suffer so much?' Then shortly after: 'If there is a God, what will become of me?' Thus he will continue for some time, when on a sudden he will scream as if in terror and agony, and call out for me by name. On one of these occasions, which are very frequent, I went to him and enquired what he wanted. 'Stay with me,' he replied, 'for God's sake; for I cannot bear to be left alone.' I then observed that I could not always be with him, as I had much to attend to in the house. 'Then,' said he, 'send even a child to stay with me; for it is a hell to be alone.' I never saw," she concluded, "a more unhappy, a more forsaken man. It seems he cannot reconcile himself to die."

The fathers did all in their power to make Paine enter into himself and ask God's pardon. But all their endeavors were in vain: He ordered them out of his room in the highest pitch of his voice, and seemed a very maniac with rage and madness. "Let us go," said Father Fenwick to Father Kohlman. "We have nothing more to do here. He seems to be entirely abandoned by God. Further words are lost upon him. I never before or since beheld a more hardened wretch."—*Lives of the Catholic Bishops of America*, p. 379, etc.

To the infidel and evil-doer these examples present matter worthy of serious reflection, while the believer will recognize in them the special judgment of God, which is too clearly indicated to be doubted by any honest mind. Let the unbeliever remember that the hour will come when he shall open his eyes to see the wisdom of those who have believed; when he also shall see, to his confusion, his own madness in refusing to believe. "Oh! that he would be wise, and would understand that there is none that can deliver out of the hand of the Lord." (Deut., xxxii., 39.)

We have seen what positive infidelity is; and we have seen what an infidel is. Let us now mention the various causes that lead to infidelity. These causes are corruption of the heart, neglect of prayer, ignorance of the mind, private judgment in matters of faith, and godless education. Before the prodigal son left his father's house our Lord said that "he asked for the portion of goods which should come to him." We are thus informed of the desire which was in the prodigal's mind before he quitted his father's roof; his aim was to spend those goods without restraint or remonstrance. For the same purpose, also, he took these goods "into a far country," where he would no longer

be under his father's eye. Thus it is with every sinner. When his passions begin to gain a sway over him, he invents maxims and principles of conduct in order that he may rid himself of the reproaches of the law of God—"putting for the commandments of God the traditions of men"—and by giving a less offensive name to his sin he stills the voice of conscience within him. The next step is to "go into a far country"—into the farthest possible. He says that there is no God. Corruption of the heart or slavery of the passions is the very first cause, the prolific mother, of infidelity.

You will find men who deny the immortality of the soul, who deny the eternity of hell, who deny the infallibility of the Pope. You will find men who deny the divine origin of confession; but why? It is because these wholesome truths put a check to their passions. They cannot believe in these truths and at the same time gratify their criminal desires. "It is only the *fool*, the impious man, that says in his heart there is no God." (Ps., xiii., 1.) An honest, virtuous man would never think of doubting or contradicting these sacred truths.

In spite of its innate pride, the mind is the slave of the heart. If the heart soars to heaven on the wings of divine love, the mind, too, rises with it. But if the heart is buried in the mire of filthy passions, it soon exhales dark, fetid vapors, which obscure the intellect. The infidel's reason is the dupe of his heart.

There is a man who was once a good Catholic, who used formerly to go regularly to Mass and to confession. He is now an infidel; goes no longer to confession. But why? Has he become more enlightened? Has he received some new knowledge? The only new knowledge he has received

is the sad knowledge of sin. He believed as long as he was virtuous. He began to doubt only when he began to be immoral; he became an infidel only when he became a libertine. The history of his life is soon told. Wishing to gratify his passions without restraint and without remorse, he tried to rid himself of a religion which would have troubled him in the midst of his unlawful pleasures.

His face tells the story. The sacred nobility of the free man is there no longer. He has become a member of a secret society. The dark, oath-bound seal of hell is on his lips. His hands are defiled by injustice. He hath grown rich, but his riches are accursed. His heart is a slave to the most shameful passions. He wishes to gratify his wicked desires without shame, without remorse. In order to do this he tries to get rid of religion. The solemn form of religion appears in the midst of his sinful revelry like the hand on the wall, writing in letters of fire the dread sentence of his damnation. His conscience tells him that there is a hell to punish his crimes, and he tries to stifle the voice of his conscience, and says; "There is no hell." The voice of his conscience reproaches him and tells him that there is a just God, who will punish him for his sins; and he stifles the voice of his conscience, and says: "There is no God." His conscience, says to him: "Ha! there is a strict and terrible judgment that awaits you after death;" and he stifles the voice of his conscience, and says: "There is no hereafter; it is all over after death." He tries to prove to himself and to others that man is a brute, because he wishes to live like a brute. He hates religion, he hates the priest, he hates the Church, he hates the Sacraments, he hates every thing that reminds him of God, because he knows that by his crimes he has made himself

an enemy of God. The unhappy man says, "There is no hell," and whithersoever he goes he carries hell in his heart. In the silence of the night, when others are sleeping around him, he cannot sleep. His conscience tortures him. It asks him: "Were you to die in this state this night, what would become of you? It is a terrible thing to fall unprepared into the hands of the living God! Think of eternity! eternity! eternity! Think of the worm that never dies, and the fire that never quenches!" No wonder that men sometimes commit suicide. They cannot bear the remorse of conscience, and so they try to find rest in death. The hell of the infidel begins even in this world, and it continues throughout all eternity in the next.

There lived in France a certain philosopher, an infidel, named Banguer. When he was lying on his death-bed, he sent for the priest, the Rev. Father La Berthonie, to assist him in his last moments. The priest instructed him at great length in order to rouse his faith. "Hasten to the end, Rev. Father," said the philosopher; "for it is my *heart* rather than my mind that wants to be healed; I was an unbeliever only *because I was bad.*"

One day a Lieutenant-General revealed his doubts on religion to one of his officers in whom he placed great confidence. This officer advised him to confer with Father Neuville and Father Renaud. But notwithstanding the solidity of their arguments, he could not arrive at conviction. Hereupon the officer prevailed on him to visit an ecclesiastic whom he had chosen for his confessor. The Lieutenant-General called upon him in the name of his friend. He told him what had brought him, and the fruitless steps he had already taken to dissipate his doubts. "What could I possibly add, sir," answered the priest,

“to the arguments of men like Fathers Neuville and Renaud? What force can their arguments receive from my lips? I have only one recourse; please try it. Enter into my oratory; let us pray God to enlighten your understanding, to touch your heart, and then begin by making your confession.” “I, sir, when I scarcely believe in the existence of God?” “You believe in him, and in religion too, far more than you think. Kneel down, make the sign of the cross, I am going to call to your mind the *Confiteor*, and to put to you the necessary questions.” After sundry marks of astonishment that seemed but too well founded, after many repetitions of his doubts, and even of his infidelity, after many objections and difficulties, the Lieutenant-General at length obeyed, and answered honestly the different questions of the priest. The priest went back with him to the time of his first transgressions; he dwelt at some length on the disorders that ensued. By degrees the heart of the penitent opened itself, his voice began to tremble, and tears involuntarily flowed from his eyes. The priest, seeing his agitation, ceased questioning him, and giving full scope to all the ardor of his zeal, he exhorted him in the most pathetic and touching manner, and thus accomplished what his interrogations and the first avowals made to him had begun. “O father!” exclaimed the penitent, sobbing, “you have followed the only path that could have conducted you to my heart! I am a wretch who has been led astray by his passions alone, who carried his judge in the hidden recesses of his conscience, but who stifled that judge’s voice, who dared not avow his crimes to himself, and who preferred to believe nothing rather than be obliged to live well! I will return to-morrow, and

I will then make a more lengthy confession." And he did so with sentiments of the most lively compunction; he died some years after, in the practice of the most austere penance and of a truly Christian life. (Debussi, *Nouveau Mois de Marie*, 143.)

The second cause of infidelity is the neglect of prayer. This was pointed out many centuries ago by a great prophet. "The impious," says David—and who is more impious than an infidel?—"the impious are corrupt, and they become abominable in their ways. . . . They are all gone aside; they are become unprofitable together; there is none that does good, no, not one. . . . Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways." "Now the cause of all this wickedness," continues David, "is because they have not called upon the Lord." God is the light of our understanding, the strength of our will, and the life of our heart. The more we neglect to pray to God, the more we experience darkness in our understanding, weakness in our will, and deadly coldness in our heart. Our passions, the temptations of the devil, and the allurements of the world, will draw us headlong from one abyss of wickedness to another, until we fall into the deepest of all—into infidelity, and indifference to all religion.

The third cause of infidelity, and indifference to all religion, is the ignorance of the mind. Many are infidels because they never received any instruction in religion. Among these are some who are more guilty than others; namely, those who do not wish to be instructed in their religious duties, in order that they may more easily dispense themselves with the obligations of complying with these duties. Now it is this very class of men that easily give ear to the principles of infidelity, because these prin-

ciples are more pleasing to their corrupt nature than those of our holy religion. This class is very numerous and their number is on the increase every day. For, not having any religion themselves, nor wishing to have any, what wonder if their children follow their example? Such as the tree is, will the fruit be. A Catholic lady of New York asked a little child: "How many gods are there, and who made you?" The child could not answer the questions. So the Catholic lady said to the child: "Say, 'There is but one God;' say, 'God made me.'" When the mother of the child heard this she flew into a passion, and said: "My child shall never learn such a thing; God has nothing to do with my child." Behold how infidel mothers bring up their children!

There are others who became infidels because they were never sufficiently instructed in their holy religion. There is a certain class of parents who have their children instructed in everything but their religion. They allow them to grow up in ignorance of everything except of the means by which they make money. Now, when the time draws near for these children to make their First Communion, their parents will take them to the priest to prepare them for this holy sacrament in a week or two. What can children learn in a couple of weeks? Certain it is that what they learn in that time very seldom enters their hearts. Their hearts are not prepared for the Word of God; they are light-minded, and in many cases corrupt, and what they learn is learned from constraint. No sooner are they free from constraint than they throw their religion overboard; they become the worst kind of infidels and the worst enemies of our holy religion.

The young man who set fire to St. Augustine's Church,

in Philadelphia, Pa., was a Catholic, and he gloried in being able to burn his name out of the baptismal record. Archbishop Spalding, of Baltimore, asserted one day that in one body of Methodist preachers he had observed seven or eight who were the children of Catholic parents, and that they were the smartest preachers among them. Bishop England said that the Catholic Church loses more, in this country, by apostasy than it gains by conversions. Thus is verified in these children what God has said through the Prophet Isaias: "Therefore is my people led away captive because they had not knowledge." (chap. v., 13.)

These three causes of infidelity have existed from the beginning of the world. But about three centuries ago Protestantism opened a very wide avenue to the same end, as we shall see in the explanation of the next question.

18 What is heresy?

Heresy is the obstinate clinging to error of a baptized person, in opposition to a truth taught by the Catholic Church.

The word "heresy" is derived from the Greek, and means to choose or adhere to a certain thing. Hence a baptized person, professing christianity and choosing at the same time for himself what to believe and what not to believe, as he pleases, in obstinate opposition to any particular truth which he knows is taught by the Catholic Church as a truth revealed by God, is a heretic. Three things, therefore, are required to make a person guilty of the sin of heresy.

1. He must be baptized and profess Christianity. This distinguishes him from a Jew and idolater.

2. He must refuse to believe a truth revealed by God, and taught by the Church as so revealed.

3. He must obstinately adhere to error, preferring his own private judgment in matters of faith and morals to the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church.

Heresy, therefore, is a corruption of the true faith. This corruption takes place either by altering the truths which constitute the principal articles of faith, or by denying obstinately those which result therefrom. But, as the error of a geometrician does not affect the principles of geometry, so is the error of a person, which does not affect the fundamental truths of faith, no real heresy.

Should a person have embraced an opinion which is contrary to faith, without knowing that it is opposed to faith, he is, in this case, no heretic, if he is disposed to renounce his error as soon as he comes to know the truth.

A baptized person, then, professing Christianity, commits the sin of heresy, when he obstinately rejects a truth revealed by God and taught by the Church as so revealed, or when he embraces an opinion contrary to faith, maintains it obstinately, and refuses to submit to the authority of the head of the Church; or when he wilfully doubts the truth of an article of faith, for by such a wilful doubt he actually questions God's knowledge and truth, and to do this is to be guilty of heresy. "The real character of rank heresy," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "consists in want of submission to the head of the Church."

It is false to say that only those truths are of faith which have been defined by the Church, and that he only is a heretic who denies a defined truth.

A man steals a large amount of money from his neighbor. Now is that man no thief so long as the court has not pronounced him guilty of theft?

Jesus Christ has revealed to his Church a certain

number of truths. She knows what those truths are. She always believed and taught them as revealed truths, but she defined many of these truths in precise terms only when it was fit or necessary to do so. These definitions of the faith are so many judgments of the Church against those who denied her doctrine or called it into doubt, out of vincible or invincible ignorance. Those who, out of invincible ignorance, denied certain revealed truths, were excused from heresy until the Church delivered them from the ignorance of these truths by declaring and defining them in precise terms. A Christian, then, who knows that a certain truth is revealed by God and taught by the Church as so revealed, though not *defined* by her, becomes guilty of heresy if he denies or wilfully doubts that truth. No doubt, Luther, Calvin, etc., were considered by the Church as heretics even before she had defined those truths which were denied by those impious men, and those denied truths were articles of faith, and as such believed just as firmly before as after their definition by the Council of Trent.

Any one, then, who sufficiently knows the truths of the true religion, and denies even but one of them, commits one of the greatest sins. To reject what we know has been revealed by God is not only to cut ourselves off from all the blessings of religion, but it is to call in question the Truth of God, and he who calls in question the Truth of God offers to him the greatest insult. We believe the truths of faith, because God revealed them and proposes them to our faith by his infallible Church. Now, to believe some of these truths, and reject one or more of them, is as much as to say: I believe that God told the truth in this point, but not in that other. This is a horrible blas-

phemy. Wilful heresy, therefore, in regard even to but one sacred truth of religion destroys all faith, attacking as it does the authority of God, who revealed the truth. If a man who poisons the food of his fellow-men is most damnable in the sight of God, how much more damnable are not those men who poison the souls of men by the seed of heresy !

To take away the life of the body is a mortal sin. Now is it not a greater crime to rob the soul of its life—the grace of God, and lead it to everlasting perdition by false doctrines ? Hence it is that Holy Scripture condemns the sin of heresy in the strongest terms. “ A man, ” says St. Paul, “ that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition avoid ; knowing that he who is such an one is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgement.” (Tit., iii., 10.) And again he says: “ Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema, ” that is, accursed. (Gal., i., 8, 9.) St. Paul also classes sects or heresies among the works of the flesh, and says that those who do such things, shall not obtain the kingdom of God. (Gal., i., 29.)

When the emperor Valens passed the decree that St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea, should depart into banishment, Almighty God passed, at the same time, a decree against the only son of the emperor, named Valentinian Galatus, a child then about six years old. That very night the royal infant was seized with a violent fever. The physicians were not able to give him the least relief. The empress Dominica told the emperor, that the sickness of the child was a punishment of God, for the decree of banishment which he had passed against the

Archbishop; and that, on this account, she had been disquieted by terrible dreams.

The emperor sent immediately for the saint, who was just preparing to go into exile. No sooner had the holy Archbishop entered the palace, than the young prince's fever began to abate. St. Basil assured the emperor and the empress that their son would be restored to perfect health, if they should have him instructed and brought up in the Catholic faith. The emperor accepted the condition. St. Basil prayed over the young prince and obtained his complete cure from God. But Valens was unfaithful to his promise. He sent afterwards for a heretical bishop to baptize the child. Thereupon the young prince relapsed and died. (Butler's Lives of the Saints, June 14.)

The Catholic faith restored the sick child to perfect health all on a sudden, and heresy destroyed this blessing and caused almost sudden death. The blessing bestowed upon the soul by Catholic faith is life everlasting, whilst heresy brings upon it everlasting destruction.

In the history of the foundation of the Society of Jesus, in the kingdom of Naples, is related the following story of a noble youth of Scotland, named William Elphinstone. This youth was a relation of King James. Born of heretical parents he followed the false sect to which they belonged. But enlightened by divine grace, which showed him his errors, he went to France, where, with the assistance of a Jesuit Father, who was, like himself, a Scotchman, and still more by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, he at length saw the truth of the Catholic religion, abjured heresy, and became a Catholic. He went afterwards to Rome, where a friend of his found him one day very much afflicted and weeping, on being asked the

cause of his affliction, he answered, that in the night his mother had appeared to him and said: "My son, it is well for thee that thou hast entered the true Church. I myself am lost, because I died in heresy."

From that time, the young convert became very fervent in the practice of his religion. He joined the Society of Jesus, and died in it a very edifying religious.

To understand still better the heinousness of the sin of heresy, we have but to consider that it leads to infidelity and even to idolatry.

All the heresies of our age and country go by the name of Protestantism. Protestantism introduced the principle that "there is no divinely-appointed authority to teach infallibly. Let every man read the Bible and judge for himself."

Upon this false principle they even boldly denied the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. What more natural than gradually to begin to deny with the same boldness almost all the Gospel truths? Why should the one who does not care for Jesus Christ upon the altar be expected to care for Jesus Christ in heaven, and for all that He has taught us? Hence it is that what they may call their religion and their religious service is in itself neither inviting nor impressive; it has nothing in it to stir up the fountains of feeling; to call forth the music and poetry of the soul; to convey salutary instruction or to awaken lively interest. It possesses no trait of grandeur, of sublimity; it has certainly not one element of poetry or pathos. Generally cold and lifeless, it becomes warm only by a violent effort, and then it runs into the opposite extreme of intemperate excitement and sentimentalism; nay, it is no exaggeration to say, that

religiousness among the greater part of Protestants in our day and country seems to have well-nigh become extinct. They seem to have lost all spiritual conceptions, and no longer to possess any spiritual aspiration. Lacking as they do the light, the warmth, and the life-giving power of the sun of the Catholic Church—the holy Mass, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament—they seem to have become, or to be near becoming, what our world would be if there were no sun in the heavens.

For this reason is it that the greater part of Protestants are so completely absorbed in temporal interests, in the things that fall under their senses, that their whole life is only materialism put in action. Lucre is the sole object on which their eyes are constantly fixed. A burning thirst to realize some profit, great or small, absorbs all their faculties, the whole energy of their being. They never pursue anything with ardor but riches and enjoyments. God, the soul, a future life—they believe in none of them; or rather, they never think about them at all. If they ever take up a moral or a religious book, or go to a meeting house, it is only by way of amusement—to pass the time away. It is a less serious occupation than smoking a pipe or drinking a cup of tea. If you speak to them about the foundations of faith, of the principles of Christianity, of the importance of salvation, the certainty of a life beyond the grave—all these truths which so powerfully impress a mind susceptible of religious feeling—they listen with a certain pleasure; for it amuses them and piques their curiosity. In their opinion all this is “true, fine, grand.” They deplore the blindness of men who attach themselves to the perishable goods of this world; perhaps they will even give utterance

to some fine sentences on the happiness of knowing the true God, of serving Him, and of meriting by this means the reward of eternal life. They simply never think of religion at all; they like very well to talk about it, but it is as of a thing not made for them—a thing with which, personally, they have nothing to do. This indifference they carry so far—religious sensibility is so entirely withered or dead within them—that they care not a straw whether a doctrine is true or false, good or bad. Religion is to them simply a fashion, which those may follow who have a taste for it. By and by, all in good time, they say; one should never be precipitate; it is not good to be too enthusiastic. No doubt the Catholic religion is beautiful and sublime, its doctrine explains with method and clearness all that is necessary for man to know. Whoever has any sense will see that, and will adopt it in his heart with all sincerity; but after all, one must not think too much of these things, and increase the cares of life. Now, just consider we have a body; how many cares it demands. It must be clothed, fed, and sheltered from the injuries of the weather; its infirmities are great, and its maladies are numerous. It is agreed on all hands that health is our most precious good. This body that we see, that we touch, must be taken care of every day and every moment of the day. Is not this enough without troubling ourselves about a soul that we never see? The life of man is short and full of misery; it is made up of a succession of important concerns that follow one another without interruption. Our hearts and our minds are scarcely sufficient for the solitudes of the present life; is it wise, then, to torment one's self about the future? Is it not far better to live in blessed ignorance?

Ask them, What would you think of a traveller who, on finding himself at a dilapidated inn, open to all the winds, and deficient in the most absolute necessaries, should spend all his time in trying how he could make himself most comfortable in it, without ever thinking of preparing himself for his departure and his return into the bosom of his family ? Would this traveller be acting in a wise and reasonable manner ? “ No,” they will reply ; “ one must not travel in that way. But man, nevertheless, must confine himself within proper limits. How can he provide for two lives at the same time ? I take care of this life, and the care of the other I leave to God.” If a traveller ought not regularly to take up his abode at an inn, neither ought he to travel on two roads at the same time. When one wishes to cross a river, it will not do to have two boats, and set a foot in each ; such a proceeding would involve the risk of a tumble into the water and drowning one’s self. Such is the deep abyss of religious indifferentism into which so many Protestants of our day have fallen, and from which they naturally fall into one deeper still—infidelity.

A body which has lost the principle of its animation becomes dust. Hence it is an axiom that the change or perversion of the principles by which anything was produced is the destruction of that very thing ; if you can change or pervert the principles from which anything springs, you destroy it. For instance, one single foreign element introduced into the blood produces death ; one false assumption admitted into science destroys its certainty ; one false principle admitted into faith and morals, is fatal. The reformers started wrong. They would reform the Church by placing her under human control. Their

successors have in each generation found they did not go far enough, and have, each in turn, struggled to push it further and further, till they find themselves without any church life, without faith, without religion, and beginning to doubt if there be even a God.

It is a well-known fact that, before the Reformation, infidels were scarcely known in the Christian world. Since that event they have come forth in swarms. It is from the writings of Herbert, Hobbes, Bloum, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and Boyle that Voltaire and his party drew the objections and errors which they have brought so generally into fashion in the world. According to Diderot and d'Alembert, the first step that the untractable Catholic takes is to adopt the Protestant principle of private judgment. He establishes himself judge of his religion ; leaves and joins the reform. Dissatisfied with the incoherent doctrines he there discovers, he passes over to the Socinians, whose inconsequences soon drive him into Deism. Still pursued by unexpected difficulties, he finds refuge in universal doubt ; but still haunted by uneasiness, he at length resolves to take the last step, and proceeds to terminate the long chain of his errors in infidelity. Let us not forget that the first link of this chain is attached to the fundamental maxim of private judgment. They judged of religion as they did of their breakfast and dinner. A religion was good or bad, true or false, just as it suited their tastes, their likings ; their religious devotion varied like the weather ; they must feel it as they felt the heat and cold.

New fashions of belief sprang up, and changed and disappeared as rapidly as the new fashions of dress. Men judged not only of every revealed doctrine, but they also

judged of the Bible itself. Protestantism, having no authority, could not check this headlong tendency to unbelief. Its ministers dare no longer preach or teach any doctrine which is displeasing to the people. Every Protestant preacher who wishes to be heard, and to retain his salary, must first feel the pulse of his hearers; he must make himself the slave of their opinions and likings.

It is, therefore, historically correct that the same principle that created Protestantism three centuries ago, has never ceased since that time to spin it out into a thousand different sects, and has concluded by covering Europe and America with that multitude of free-thinkers and infidels who place these countries on the verge of ruin.

The individual reason taking as it does the place of faith, the Protestant, whether he believes it or not, is an infidel in germ, and the infidel is a Protestant in full bloom. In other words, infidelity is nothing but Protestantism in the highest degree. Hence it is that Edgar Quinet, a great herald of Protestantism, is right in styling the Protestant sects *the thousand gates open to get out of Christianity*.

No wonder, then, that thousands of Protestants have ended, and continue to end, in framing their own formula of faith thus: "I believe in nothing." And here, I ask, what is easier, from this state of irreligion and infidelity, than the passage to idolatry?

This assertion may seem incredible to some at this day, and may be esteemed an absurdity; but idolatry is expressly mentioned in the Apocalypse as existing in the time of Antichrist. And, indeed, our surprise will much abate if we take into consideration the temper and disposition of the present times. When men divest themselves, as they seem to do at present, of all fear of the Supreme Being, of all re-

spect of their Creator and Lord ; when they surrender themselves to the gratification of sensuality ; when they give full freedom to the human passions and direct their whole study to the pursuits of a corrupt world, with a total forgetfulness of a future state ; when they give children a godless education, and have no longer any religion to teach them, may we not say that the transition to idolatry is easy ? When all the steps leading up to a certain point are taken, what wonder if we arrive at that point ? Such was the gradual degeneracy of mankind in the early ages of the world, that brought on the abominable practices of idol-worship.

Of course it will be said that we have the happiness of living in the most enlightened of all ages ; our knowledge is more perfect, our ideas more developed and refined, the human faculties more improved and better cultivated than they ever were before ; in fine, that the present race of mankind may be reckoned a society of philosophers when compared to the generations that have gone before. How is it possible, then, that such stupidity can seize upon the human mind as to sink it into idolatry ?

This kind of reasoning is more specious than solid. For, allowing the present times to surpass the past in refinement and knowledge, it must be said that they are proportionately more vicious. Refinement of reason has contributed, as every one knows, to refine upon the means of gratifying the human passions.

Besides, however enlightened the mind may be supposed to be, if the heart is corrupt the excesses into which a man will run are evidenced by daily experience.

Witness our modern spiritism (spiritualism). What else is our modern spiritualism than a revival of the old heathen idol-worship ?

Satan is constantly engaged in doing all in his power to entice men away from God, and to have himself worshipped instead of the Creator. The introduction, establishment, persistence and power of the various cruel, revolting superstitions, of the ancient heathen world, or of pagan nations in modern times, are nothing but the work of the devil. They reveal a more than human power. God permitted Satan to operate upon man's morbid nature, as a deserved punishment upon the Gentiles for their hatred of truth and their apostasy from the primitive religion. Men left to themselves, to human nature alone, however low they might be prone to descend, never could descend so low as to worship wood and stone, four-footed beasts, and creeping things. To do this needs satanic delusion.

Paganism in its old form was doomed. Christianity had silenced the oracles and driven the devils back to hell. How was the devil to re-establish his worship on earth, and carry on his war against the Son of God and the religion which he taught us? Evidently only by changing his tactics and turning the truth into a lie. He found men in all the heresiarchs who, like Eve, gave ear to his suggestions, and believed him more than the Infallible Word of Jesus Christ. Thus he has succeeded in banishing the true religion from whole countries, or in mixing it with false doctrines. He has prevailed upon thousands to believe the doctrines of vain, self-conceited men, rather than the religion taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It is by heresies, revolutions, bad secret societies, and godless state school education, that he has succeeded so far as to bring thousands of men back to a state of heathenism and infidelity. The time has come for him to introduce idolatry, or his own worship. To do this he makes use of spiritu-

alism. Through the spirit-mediums he performs lying wonders. He gives pretended revelations from the spirit-world, in order to destroy or weaken all faith in divine revelation. He thus strives to re-establish in Christian lands that very same devil-worship which has so long existed among heathen nations, and which our Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy. The Holy Scriptures assure us that all the gods of the heathens are devils (*"Omnes dii gentium dæmonia."*—Ps.) These demons took possession of the idols made of wood or stone, of gold or silver; they had temples erected in their honor; they had their sacrifices, their priests, and their priestesses. They uttered oracles. They were consulted through their mediums in all affairs of importance, and especially in order to find out the future, precisely as they are consulted by our modern spiritualists at the present day.

In modern spiritualism the devil communicates with men by means of tables, chairs, tablets, or planchette; or by rapping, writing, seeing and speaking mediums. It is all the same to the devil whether he communicates with men and leads them astray by means of idols, or by means of tables, chairs, planchette, and the like.

Assuredly, if the philosopher is not governed by the power of religion, his conduct will be absurd and even despicable to the most ignorant individual of the lowest rank.

A Socrates, a Cicero, a Seneca, are said to have been acquainted with the knowledge of one supreme God; but they had not courage to profess his worship, and in their public conduct basely sacrificed to stocks and stones with the vulgar. When men have banished from their heart the sense of religion, and despise the rights of justice, (and

is this not the case with numbers ?) will many of them scruple to offer incense to a statue, if by so doing they serve their ambition, their interest, or whatever may be their favorite passion ? Where is the cause for surprise, then, if infidelity and irreligion be succeeded by idolatry ? That pride alone, when inflamed with a constant flow of prosperity, may raise a man to the extravagant presumption of claiming for himself divine honors, we see in the example of Alexander, the celebrated Macedonian conqueror, and of several emperors of Babylon and ancient Rome. From suggestions of that same principle of pride, it will happen that Antichrist, elevated by a continued course of victories and conquests, will set himself up for a god. And as at that time the propagation of infidelity, irreligion, and immorality will have become universal, this defection from faith, disregard for its teachers, licentiousness in opinions, depravity in morals, will so far deaden all influence of religion, and cause such degeneracy in mankind, that many will be base enough even to espouse idolatry, to yield to the absurd impiety of worshipping Antichrist as their Lord and God ; some out of fear for what they may lose, others to gain what they covet.

Then will it be evident to all that infidelity, and even idolatry, existed in the Protestant principle of private judgment, as the oak exists in the acorn, as the consequence is in the premise ; or, in other words, that this principle was but the powerful weapon of Satan to carry on his war against Christ ; of the sons of Belial to fight the keepers of the law ; of false anti-social liberty to destroy true and rational liberty—to make worshippers of the devil out of the worshippers of God.

It may be asked here, why does God permit the Catholic faith to be assailed by heresy ?

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, with the exception of the Greek schismatics, a few Lollards in England, some Waldenses in Piedmont, scattered Albigenses or Manicheans, and a few followers of Huss and Zisca among the Bohemians, all Europe was Roman Catholic. England, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden,—every civilized nation was in the unity of the Catholic faith. Many of these nations were at the height of their power and prosperity. Portugal was pushing her discoveries beyond the Cape of Good Hope, and forming Catholic settlements in the East Indies. Christopher Columbus, a Roman Catholic, had discovered America, under the patronage of the Catholic Isabella of Spain. England was in a state of great prosperity. Her two Catholic Universities of Oxford and Cambridge contained, at one time, more than fifty thousand students. The country was covered with noble churches, abbeys, and monasteries, and with hospitals, where the poor were fed, clothed, and instructed.

However, the progress of civilization tended to foster a spirit of pride, and encourage the lust of novelties. The prosperity of the Church led to luxury, and in many cases to a relaxation of discipline. There were, as there always have been, in every period of the Church, the days of the apostles not excepted, bad men in the Church. The wheat and tares grow together until the harvest. The net of the Church encloses good and bad. The writings of Wickliffe, Huss, and their followers, had unsettled the minds of many. Princes were restive under the check held by the Church upon their rapacity and lusts. A Henry VIII., for example, wanted to divorce a

wife to whom he had been married twenty years, that he might marry a young and pretty one. He could not do this, so long as he acknowledged the spiritual supremacy of the pope. Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, wanted two wives. No pope would give him a dispensation to marry and live with two women at once. Then there were multitudes of wicked and avaricious nobles, who wanted but an excuse to plunder the churches, abbeys, and monasteries, whose property was held in trust for the education of the people, and the care of the poor, aged, and sick, all over Europe. Then there were priests and monks eager to embrace a relaxed discipline; and many people who, incited by the cry of liberty, were ready to rush into license, and make war upon every principle of religion and social order, as soon as circumstances would favor the outbreak of this rebel spirit in individuals and masses. Now when God, says St. Gregory, sees in the Church many revelling in their vices, and as St. Paul observes, believing in God, confessing the truth of his mysteries, but belying their faith by their works, he punishes them by permitting that, after having lost grace, they also lose the holy knowledge which they had of his mysteries, and that without any other persecution than that of their vices, they deny the faith. It is of these David speaks, when he says: "Destroy Jerusalem to its foundations" (Ps., cxxxvi, 7.); leave not a stone upon a stone. When the wicked spirits have ruined in a soul the edifice of virtue, they sap its foundation, which is faith. St. Cyprian, therefore said: "Let no one think that virtuous men and good Christians ever leave the bosom of the Church; it is not the wheat that the winds lift; but the chaff; trees deeply rooted are not blown down

by the breeze, but those which have no roots. It is rotten fruits that fall off the trees, not sound ones; bad Catholics become heretics, as sickness is engendered by bad humors. At first, faith languishes in them, because of their vices; then it becomes sick; next it dies, because, since sin is essentially a blindness of spirit; the more a man sins, the more he is blinded; his faith grows weaker and weaker; the light of this divine torch decreases, and soon the least wind of temptation or doubt suffices to extinguish it." Witness the great defection from faith in the sixteenth century, when God permitted heresies to arise, in order to exercise his justice against those who were ready to abandon the truth, and his mercy toward those who remained attached to it; to prove, by trials, those who were firm in the faith, and to separate them from those who loved error; to exercise the patience and charity of the Church, and to sanctify the elect; to give occasion for the illustration of religious truth and the holy Scripture; to make pastors more vigilant, and value more the sacred deposit of faith; in fine, to render the authority of tradition more clear and incontestable. Heresy arose in all its strength; Martin Luther was its ringleader and its spokesman.

Martin Luther, an Augustinian friar, a bold man and a vehement declaimer, having imbibed erroneous sentiments from the heretical writings of John Huss of Bohemia, took occasion, from the publication of indulgences promulgated by Pope Leo X., to break with the Catholic Church, and to propagate his new errors, in 1517, at Wirtemberg, in Saxony. He first inveighed against the abuse of indulgences; then he called in question their efficacy; and at last totally rejected them. He declaimed against the

supremacy of the See of Rome, and condemned the whole Church, pretending that Christ had abandoned it, and that it wanted reforming, as well in faith as discipline. Thus this new evangelist commenced that fatal defection from the ancient faith, which was styled "Reformation." The new doctrines, being calculated to gratify the vicious inclinations of the human heart, spread with the rapidity of an inundation. Frederick, Elector of Saxony, John Frederick, his successor, and Phillip, Landgrave of Hesse, became Luther's disciples. Gustavus Ericus, King of Sweden, and Christian III., King of Denmark, also declared in favor of Lutheranism. It secured a footing in Hungary. Poland, after tasting a great variety of doctrines, left, to every individual the liberty of choosing for himself. Muncer, a disciple of Luther, set up for doctor himself, and, with Nicholas Stark, gave birth to the sect of Anabaptists, which was propagated in Suabia, and other provinces of Germany, in the Low Countries. Calvin, a man of bold, obstinate spirit, and indefatigable in his labors, in imitation of Luther, turned Reformer also. He contrived to have his new tenets received at Geneva, in 1541. After his death, Beza preached the same doctrine. It insinuated itself into some parts of Germany, Hungary, and Bohemia, and became the religion of Holland. It was imported by John Knox, an apostate priest, into Scotland, where, under the name of Presbyterianism, it took deep root, and spread over the kingdom. But, among the deluded nation, none drank more deeply of the cup of error than England. For many centuries this country had been conspicuous in the Christian world for the orthodoxy of its belief, as also for the number of its saints. But by a misfortune never to be sufficiently lamented, and by

an unfathomable judgment from above, its Church shared a fate which seemed the least to threaten it. The lust and avarice of one despotic sovereign threw down the fair edifice, and tore it off from the rock on which it had hitherto stood. Henry VIII., at first a valiant asserter of the Catholic faith against Luther, giving way to the violent passions which he had not sufficient courage to curb, renounced the supreme jurisdiction which the pope had always held in the Church, presumed to arrogate to himself that power in his own dominions, and thus gave a deadly blow to religion. He then forced his subjects into the same fatal defection. Once introduced, it soon overspread the land. Being, from its nature, limited by no fixed principle, it has since taken a hundred different shapes, under different names, such as: the Calvinists, Arminians, Antinomians, Independants, Kilhamites, Glassites, Haldanites, Bereans, Swedenborgians, New-Jerusalemites, Orthodox Quakers, Hicksites, Shakers, Panters, Seekers, Jumpers, Reformed Methodists, German Methodists, Albright Methodists, Episcopal Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Methodists North, Methodists South, Protestant Methodists, Episcopalians, High Church Episcopalians, Low Church Episcopalians, Ritualists, Puseyites, Dutch Reformed, Dutch non-Reformed, Christian Israelites, Baptists, Particular Baptists, Seventh-day Baptists, Hardshell Baptists, Softshell Baptists, Forty Gallon Baptists, Sixty Gallon Baptists, African Baptists, Free-will Baptists, Church of God Baptists, Regular Baptists, Anti-mission Baptists, Six Principle Baptist River Brethren, Winebremarians, Menonites, Second Adventists, Millerites, Christian. Baptists, Universalis, Orthodox Congregationalists, Campbellites, Presbyterians, Old-

School and New-School Presbyterians, Cumberland Presbyterians, United Presbyterians, The Only True Church of Christ, 573 Bowery, N. Y., up stairs, 5th story, Latter-day Saints, Restorationists, Schwentfelders, Spiritualists, Mormons, Christian Perfectionists, etc., etc., etc. All these sects are called Protestants, because they all unite in protesting against their mother, the Roman Catholic Church.

Some time after, when the reforming spirit had reached its full growth, Dudithius, a learned Protestant divine, in his epistle to Beza, wrote: "What sort of people are our Protestants, straggling to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, sometimes to this side, sometimes to that? You may, perhaps, know what their sentiments in matters of religion are to-day, but you can never tell precisely what they will be to-morrow. In what article of religion do these churches agree which have cast off the Bishop of Rome? Examine all from top to bottom, and you will scarce find one thing affirmed by one, which was not immediately condemned by another for wicked doctrine." The same confusion of opinions was described by an English Protestant, the learned Dr. Walton, about the middle of the last century, in his preface to his Polyglot, where he says: "Aristarchus heretofore could scarce find seven wise men in Greece; but with us, scarce are to be found so many idiots. For all are doctors, all are divinely learned; there is not so much as the meanest fanatic who does not give you his own dreams for the word of God. The bottomless pit seems to have been opened, from whence a smoke has arisen which has darkened the heaven and the stars, and locusts have come out with stings, a numerous race of sectaries and heretics, who have renewed all the ancient heresies, and invented

many monstrous opinions of their own. These have filled our cities, villages, camps, houses, nay, our pulpits, too, and lead the poor deluded people with them to the pit of perdition." "Yes," writes another author, "every ten years, or nearly so, the Protestant theological literature undergoes a complete revolution. What was admired during the one decennial period is rejected in the next, and the image which they adored is burnt, to make way for new divinities; the dogmas which were held in honor fall into discredit; the classical treatise of morality is banished among the old books out of date; criticism overturns criticism; the commentary of yesterday ridicules that of the previous day, and what was clearly proved in 1840, is not less clearly disproved in 1850. The theological systems of Protestantism are as numerous as the political constitutions of France—one revolution only awaits another." (Le Semeur, June, 1850.) It is indeed utterly impossible to keep the various members of one single sect from perpetual disputes, even about the essential truths of revealed religion. And those religious differences exist not only in the same sect, not only in the same country and town, but even in the same family. Nay, the self-same individual, at different periods of his life, is often in flagrant contradiction with himself. To-day he avows opinions which yesterday he abhorred, and to-morrow he will exchange these again for new ones. At last, after belonging, successively, to various new-fangled sects, he generally ends by professing unmitigated contempt for them all. By their continual disputes and bickerings, and dividing and subdividing, the various Protestant sects have made themselves the scorn of honest minds, the laughing-stock of the pagan and the infidel.

These human sects, the "works of the flesh," as St. Paul calls them, alter their shape, like clouds, but feel no blow, says Mr. Marshall, because they have no substance. They fight a good deal with one another, but nobody minds it, not even themselves, nor cares what becomes of them. If one human sect perishes, it is always easy to make another, or half a dozen. They have the life of worms, and propagate by corruption. Their life is so like death that, except by the putridity which they exhale in both stages, it is impossible to tell which is which, and when they are buried, nobody can find their grave. They have simply disappeared.

The spirit of Protestantism, or the spirit of revolt against God and his Church, sprung up from the Reformer's spirit of incontinency, obstinacy and covetousness. Luther, in despite of the vow he had solemnly made to God of keeping continency, married a nun, equally bound as himself to that sacred religious promise; but, as St. Jerome says, "it is rare to find a heretic that loves chastity."

Luther's example had indeed been anticipated by Carlostadius, a priest and ringleader of the Sacramentarians, who had married a little before; and it was followed by most of the heads of the Reformation.

Zwinglius, a priest and chief of the sect that bore his name, took a wife.

Bucer, a member of the order of St. Dominic, became a Lutheran, left his cloister, and married a nun.

Æcolampadius, a Brigittin monk, became a Zwinglian, and also married.

Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, had also his wife, Peter Martyr, a canon-regular, embraced the doctrine

of Calvin, but followed the example of Luther, and married a nun.

Ochin, general of the Capuchins, became a Lutheran, and also married.

Thus the principal leaders in the Reformation went forth preaching the new gospel, with two marks upon them : apostacy from faith, and open violation of the most sacred vows.

The passion of lust, as has been already said, hurried also Henry VIII. of England, into a separation from the Catholic Church, and ranked him among the Reformers.

Those wicked men could not be expected to teach a holy doctrine ; they preached up a hitherto unheard-of " evangelical liberty," as they styled it. They told their fellow-men that they were no longer obliged to subject their understanding to the mysteries of faith, and to regulate their actions according to the laws of Christian morality ; they told that every one was free to model his belief and practice as it suited his inclinations. In pursuance of this accommodating doctrine, they dissected the Catholic faith till they reduced it to a mere skeleton ; they lopped off the reality of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the divine Christian sacrifice offered in the Mass, confession of sins, most of the sacraments, penitential exercises, several of the canonical books of Scripture, the invocation of saints, celibacy, most of the General Councils of the Church, and all present Church authority ; they perverted the nature of justification, asserting that faith alone suffices to justify man ; they made God the author of sin, and maintained the observance of the commandments to be impossible.

As a few specimens of Luther's doctrine, take the fol-

lowing: "God's commandments are all equally impossible." (De Lib., Christ. t. ii, fol. 4.) "No sins can damn a man, but only unbelief." (De Captio, Bab. t. ii, fol. 171.) "God is just, though by his own will he lays us under the necessity of being damned, and though he damns those who have not deserved it." (Tom. ii, fols. 434, 436.) "God works in us both good and evil." (Tom. ii, fol. 444.) "Christ's body is in every place, no less than the divinity itself." (Tom. iv, fol. 37.) Then for his darling principal of justification by faith, in his eleventh article against Pope Leo, he says: "Believe strongly that you are absolved, and absolved you will be, whether you have contrition or not."

Again, in his sixth article: "The contrition which is acquired by examining, recollecting, and detesting one's sins, whereby a man calls to mind his life past, in the bitterness of his soul, reflecting on the heinousness and multitude of his offences, the loss of eternal bliss, and condemnation to eternal woe,—this contrition, I say, makes a man a hypocrite, nay, even a greater sinner than he was before."

Thus, after the most immoral life, a man has a compendious method of saving himself, by simply believing that his sins are remitted through the merits of Christ.

As Luther foresaw the scandal that would arise from his own and such like sacreligious marriages, he prepared the world for it, by writing against the celibacy of the clergy and all religious vows; and all the way up, since his time, he has had imitators. He proclaimed that all such vows "were contrary to faith, to the commandments of God, and to evangelical liberty." (De Votis Monast.) He said again: "God disapproves of such a vow of living

in continency, equally as if I should vow to become the mother of God, or to create a new world." (Epist. ad Wolfgang Reisemb.) And again: "To attempt to live unmarried, is plainly to fight against God."

Now, when men give a loose rein to the depravity of nature, what wonder if the most scandalous practices ensue? Accordingly, a striking instance of this kind appeared in the license granted in 1539 to Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, to have two wives at once, which license was signed by Luther, Melanchthon, Bucer, and five other Protestant divines.

On the other hand, a wide door was laid open to another species of scandal: the doctrine of the Reformation admitted divorces in the marriage state in certain cases, contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel, and even allowed the parties thus separated to marry other wives and other husbands.

To enumerate the errors of all the Reformers would exceed the limits of this work. I shall therefore only add the principal heads of the doctrine of Calvin and the Calvinists: 1, that baptism is not necessary for salvation; 2, good works are not necessary; 3, man has no free-will; 4, Adam could not avoid his fall; 5, a great part of mankind are created to be damned, independently of their demerits; 6, man is justified by faith alone, and that justification, once obtained, cannot be lost, even by the most atrocious crimes; 7, the true faithful are also infallibly certain of their salvation; 8, the Eucharist is no more than a figure of the body and blood of Christ. Thus was the whole system of faith and morality overturned. Tradition they totally abolished; and, though they could not reject the whole of the Scripture, as being

universally acknowledged to be the word of God, they had, however, the presumption to expunge some books of it that did not coincide with their own opinions, and the rest they assumed a right to explain as they saw fit.

To pious souls, they promised a return to the fervor of primitive Christianity; to the proud, the liberty of private judgment; to the enemies of the clergy, they promised the division of their spoils; to priests and monks who were tired of the yoke of continence, the abolition of a law which they said was contrary to nature; to libertines of all classes, the suppression of fasting, abstinence, and confession. They said to kings who wished to place themselves at the head of the Church as well as the State, that they would be freed from the spiritual authority of the Church; to nobles, that they would see a rival order humbled and impoverished; to the middle classes and the vassals of the Church, that they would be emancipated from all dues and forced services.

Several princes of Germany and of the Swiss cantons supported by arms the preachers of the new doctrines. Henry VIII. imposed his doctrine on his subjects. The King of Sweden drew his people into apostasy. The Court of Navarre welcomed the Calvinists; the Court of France secretly favored them.

At length Pope Paul III. convoked a General Council at Trent, in 1545, to which the heresiarchs had appealed. Not only all the Catholic bishops, but also all Christian princes, even Protestants, were invited to come.

But now the spirit of pride and obstinacy became most apparent. Henry VIII. replied to the pope that he would never intrust the work of reforming religion in his kingdom to anyone except to himself. The apostate princes

of Germany told the papal legate that they recognized only the emperor as their sovereign; the Viceroy of Naples allowed but four bishops to go to the Council; the King of France sent only three prelates, whom he soon after recalled. Charles V. created difficulties and put obstacles in the way. Gustavus Vasa allowed no one to go to the Council. The heresiarchs also refused to appear. The Council, however, was held in spite of these difficulties. It lasted over eighteen years, because it was often interrupted by the plague, by war, and by the deaths of those who had to preside over it. The doctrines of the innovators were examined and condemned by the Council, at the last session of which there were more than three hundred bishops present, among whom were nine cardinals, three patriarchs, thirty-three archbishops, not to mention sixteen abbots or generals of religious orders, and one hundred and forty-eight theologians. All the decrees published from the commencement were read over, and were again approved and subscribed by the Fathers. Accordingly, Pius IV., in a consistory held on the 26th of January, 1564, approved and confirmed the Council in a book which was signed by all the cardinals. He drew up, the same year, a profession of faith conformable in all respects with the definitions of the Council, in which it is declared that its authority is accepted; and since that time, not only all bishops of the Catholic Church, but all priests who are called to teach the way of salvation, even to children—nay, all non-Catholics, on abjuring their errors, and returning to the bosom of the Church, have sworn that they had no other faith than that of this holy Council.

The new heresiarchs, however, continued to obscure

and disfigure the face of religion. As to Luther's sentiments in regard to the pope, bishops, councils, etc., he says, in the preface to his book, *De Abroganda Missa Privata*: "With how many powerful remedies and most evident Scriptures have I scarce been able to fortify my conscience so as to dare alone to contradict the pope, and to believe him to be Antichrist, the bishops his apostles, and the universities his brothel-houses;" and in his book, *De Judicio Ecclesiæ de Gravi Doctrina*, he says: "Christ takes from the bishops, doctors and councils, both the right and power of judging controversies, and gives them to all Christians in general."

His censure on the Council of Constance, and those that compose it, is as follows: "All John Huss's articles were condemned at Constance by Antichrist and his apostles" (meaning the pope and bishops), "in that synod of Satan, made up of most wicked sophisters; and you, most holy Vicar of Christ, I tell you plainly to your face, that all John Huss's condemned doctrines are evangelical and Christian, but all yours are impious and diabolical. I now declare," says he, speaking to the bishops "that for the future I will not vouchsafe you so much honor as to submit myself or doctrine to your judgment, or to that of an angel from heaven." (Preface to his book, *Adversus falso nominatum ordinem Episcoporum*.) Such was his spirit of pride that he made open profession of contempt for the authority of the Church, councils, and Fathers, saying: "All those who will venture their lives, their estates, their honor, and their blood, in so Christian a work as to root out all bishoprics and bishops, who are the ministers of Satan, and to pluck by the roots all their authority and jurisdiction in the world,—these persons are the true

children of God, and obey his commandments." (*Contra Statum Ecclesiæ et falso nominatum ordinem Episcoporum.*")

This spirit of pride and of obstinacy is also most apparent from the fact that Protestantism has never been ashamed to make use of any arguments, though ever so frivolous, inconsistent, or absurd, to defend its errors, and to slander and misrepresent the Catholic religion in every way possible. It shows itself again in the wars which Protestantism has waged to introduce and maintain itself. The apostate princes of Germany entered into a league, offensive and defensive, against the Emperor Charles V., and rose up in arms to establish Protestantism.

Luther had preached licentiousness, and reviled the emperor, the princes, and the bishops. The peasants lost no time in freeing themselves from their masters. They overran the country in lawless bands, burnt down castles and monasteries, and committed the most barbarous cruelties against the nobility and clergy. Germany became at last the scene of desolation and most cruel atrocities during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648.) More than one hundred thousand men fell in battle, seven cities were dismantled, one thousand religious houses were razed to the ground; three hundred churches, and immense treasures of statuary, paintings, books, etc., were destroyed.

But what is more apparent and better known than the spirit of covetousness of Protestantism? Wherever Protestantism secured a footing, it pillaged churches, seized Church property, destroyed monasteries and appropriated to itself their revenues.

In France, the Calvinists destroyed twenty thousand Catholic churches; they murdered, in Dauphiny alone, two hundred and fifty-five priests, one hundred and twelve

monks, and burned nine hundred towns and villages. In England, Henry VIII. confiscated to the crown, or distributed among his favorites, the property of six hundred and forty-five monasteries and ninety colleges, one hundred and ten hospitals, and two thousand three hundred and seventy-four free chapels and chantries.

They even dared to profane, with sacrilegious hands, the remains of the martyrs and confessors of God. In many places they forcibly took up the saints' bodies from the repositories where they were kept, burned them, and scattered their ashes abroad. What more atrocious indignity can be conceived? Are parricides or the most flagitious men ever worse treated? Among other instances, in 1562, the Calvinists broke open the shrine of St. Francis of Paula, at Plessis-Lestours; and finding his body uncorrupted fifty-five years after his death, they dragged it about the streets, and burned it in a fire which they had made with the *wood of a large crucifix*, as Billet and other historians relate.

Thus at Lyons, in the same year, the Calvinists seized upon the shrine of St. Bonaventure, stripped it of its riches, burned the saint's relics in the market-place, and threw his ashes into the river Saone, as is related by the learned Possevinus, who was in Lyons at the time.

The bodies, also, of St. Irenæus, St. Hilary, and St. Martin, as Surius asserts, were treated in the same ignominious manner. Such, also, was the treatment offered to the remains of St. Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose rich shrine, according to the words of Stowe, in his annals, "was taken to the king's use," and the bones of St. Thomas, by the command of Lord Cromwell, were burnt to ashes in September, 1538.

The Catholic religion has covered the world with its superb monuments. Protestantism has now lasted three hundred years; it was powerful in England, in Germany, in America. What has it raised? It will show us the ruins which it has made, amidst which it has planted some gardens, or established some factories. The Catholic religion is essentially a creative power, to build up, not to destroy, because it is under the immediate influence of that Holy Spirit which the Church invokes as the creative Spirit, "Creator Spiritus." The Protestant, or modern philosophical spirit, is a principle of destruction, of perpetual decomposition and disunion. Under the dominion of English Protestant power, for four hundred years, Ireland was rapidly becoming as naked and void of ancient memorials as the wilds of Africa.

The Reformers themselves were so ashamed of the progress of immorality among their proselytes, that they could not help complaining against it. Thus spoke Luther: "Men are now more revengeful, covetous, and licentious, than they were ever in the Papacy." (Postil. super Evang. Dom. i, Advent.) Then again: "Heretofore, when we were seduced by the pope, every man willingly performed good works, but now no man says or knows anything else than how to get all to himself by exactions, pillage, theft, lying, usury." (Postil. super Evang. Dom. xxvi, p. Trinit.)

Calvin wrote in the same strain: "Of so many thousands," said he, "who, renouncing Popery, seemed eagerly to embrace the Gospel, how few have amended their lives! Nay, what else did the greater part pretend to, than, by shaking off the yoke of superstition, to give themselves more liberty to follow all kinds of licentiousness?" (*Liber de Scandalis.*) Dr. Heylin, in his History of the Refor-

mation, complains also of "the great increase of viciousness" in England, in the reforming reign of Edward VI.

Erasmus says: "Take a view of this evangelical people, the Protestants. Perhaps 'tis my misfortune, but I never yet met with one who does not appear changed for the worse." (Epist. ad Vultur. Neoc.) And again: "Some persons," says he, "whom I knew formerly innocent, harmless, and without deceit, no sooner have I seen them joined to that sect (the Protestants), than they began to talk of wenches, to play at dice, to leave off prayers, being grown extremely worldly, most impatient, revengeful, vain, like vipers, tearing one another. I speak by experience." (*Ep. ad. Fratres Infer. Germaniæ.*)

M. Schérer, the principal of a Protestant school in France, wrote, in 1844, that he beholds in his reformed church "the ruin of all truth, the weakness of infinite division, the scattering of flocks, ecclesiastical anarchy, Socinianism ashamed of itself, Rationalism coated like a pill, without doctrine, without consistency. This church, deprived alike of its corporate and its dogmatic character, of its form and of its doctrine, deprived of all that constituted it a Christian church, has in truth ceased to exist in the ranks of religious communities. Its name continues, but it represents only a corpse—a phantom, or, if you will, a memory or a hope. For want of dogmatic authority, unbelief has made its way into three-fourths of our pupils." (*L'Etat Actual de l'Eglise Reformée en France, 1844.*)

Such has been Protestantism from the beginning. It is written in blood and fire upon the pages of history. Whether it takes the form of Lutheranism in Germany, Denmark, and Sweden; Anglicanism in Great Britain, or

Calvinism and Presbyterianism in Switzerland, France, Holland, Scotland, and America,—it has been everywhere the same. It has risen by tumult and violence; propagated itself by force and persecution; enriched itself by plunder, and has never ceased, by open force, persecuting laws, or slander, its attempt to exterminate the Catholic faith, and destroy the Church of Christ, which the fathers of Protestantism left from the spirit of lust, pride, and covetousness,—a spirit which induced so many of their countrymen to follow their wicked example; a spirit, on account of which, they would have been lost anyhow, even if they had not left their mother, the One Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church.

19. What is apostasy?

Apostasy is a formal renunciation of the Catholic faith.

Apostasy, or the falling away from the true faith, is another kind of infidelity. As the virtue of true faith unites us with God, so the sin of apostasy separates us from him. As the real loss of faith is a total separation from God and his holy Church, it is called apostasy of perfidy. Whoever is guilty of this kind of apostasy, is deprived of grace and of all other means of salvation, for, "Faith is the life of the soul: in the just man lives by faith." (Rom., i., 17.) "When the soul, the life of the body," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "has left the body, all its natural powers and physical organization begin to be dissolved. In like manner, when true faith, the life of the soul, is totally destroyed, a mortal disorder, a spiritual contagion, pervades through all the members and faculties of the body, which are the instruments of the soul. Hence, it is that the apostate uses every faculty of his soul and body to pervert others,

by inducing them to renounce the faith which he himself has renounced to his own perdition. "It had been better for them (heretics and apostates) not to have known the way of justice than, after having known it, to turn away from it." (2 Pet., ii., 21.) Ah! "Wo to you, ungodly men," says Holy Writ, "wo to you who have forsaken the law of the Most High Lord! If you be born, you shall be born in malediction; and if you die, in malediction shall be your position. The ungodly shall pass from malediction to destruction; the name of the ungodly shall be blotted out." (Ecclus, xli., 11-14.)

The emperor Julian fell away from the Catholic faith, and is, on this account, surnamed the Apostate. He undertook to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, and declared himself Christ's enemy, and a worshipper of the heathen gods. After he had reigned for nearly two years, he made war upon the Persians, A. D. 363. When he saw some persons flying in the heat of the battle, he raised his arms and his voice to encourage his soldiers in the pursuit, when, lo! a stray arrow passed through his ribs into his liver. In trying to pluck out the fatal weapon, he lacerated his hands, and, as his strength failed, he fell from his horse. He was taken to a neighboring hut, where he received surgical assistance, and soon after seemed to be restored. He mounted his horse again; with the intention of heading his troops, but as his strength completely failed him, he expired that very night. Theodoret and Zosimen relate that when the impious emperor received his death-wound, he filled his hand with the blood which flowed from his side, and dashing it into the air, exclaimed: "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" (meaning Jesus Christ.) Cardinal Orsi adds that,

according to the Alexandrine Chronicles, and a revelation made to St. Basil, the knight who wounded the apostate, was the martyr St. Mercurius who suffered in Cappadocia during the persecution of Decius. It is thus that God will punish all apostates from the faith. "When they die, in malediction shall be their position."

It is a most grievous sin not only to fall away from the faith, to deny it by words and signs, but even to do any thing by which others might be led to think that we have denied our faith. This was the sin committed by some of the early Christians during the time of persecution. In order to escape the rigor of the law against Christians, some weak Christians purchased from the magistrates a writ testifying that they had complied with the law of the emperor, though in reality they had not. Now all those Christians who were guilty of this act of deception were regarded by the Church as traitors to their faith and to their God. They were excommunicated, and they had to undergo a long and severe public penance before they were received back into the Church.

20 What is indifference to faith ?

Indifference to faith is to care for no religion, to consider all religions equally good, or to neglect attending religious instruction.

Our future and true home is heaven. Oh ! how full of joy and sweetness is that one word, "heaven, paradise." To the ear of the exile there is nothing sweeter than the name of home. What wonder, then, that the name of heaven should be so full of sweetness, since it is our true home, our home forever ? When blessed Egidio heard any one speak of heaven, he was so overcome with joy that he was lifted up into the air in an ecstasy of delight.

Now, no one can go to heaven unless he knows the way to heaven. If we wish to go to a certain city, the first thing we do is to ask the way that leads to it. If we do not know the way, we cannot expect to arrive at that city. So, too, if we wish to go to heaven, we must know the way that leads to it. Now, the way that leads to it is the knowing and doing of God's will. But it is God alone who can teach us his will; that is, what he requires us to believe and to do, in order to be happy with him in heaven.

The end for which man was created—his everlasting union with God—says the Vatican Council, is far above the human understanding. It was, therefore, necessary that God should make himself known to man, and teach him the end for which he was created, and what he must believe and do in order to become worthy of everlasting happiness.

Now, God himself came and taught us the truths which we must believe, the commandments which we must keep, and the means of grace which we must use to work out our salvation.

To know God's will is to know the true religion or the true way to heaven. As God is but one, so his holy will is but one, and therefore his religion is but one. In order that we might learn, with infallible certainty, this one true religion, Almighty God appointed but one infallible teaching authority—the Roman Catholic Church—and commanded all to hear her and believe her infallible doctrine, under pain of exclusion from eternal life.

Now, not to care to know the true religion, is to despise God and all he has done and suffered for our salvation. This indifference to faith is the enormous crime of the age, and especially of this country.

The sins of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah cried to heaven for vengeance. "The sin of Sodom is become exceedingly grievous. We will destroy this place, because their cry is grown loud before the Lord." (Gen., xviii., 20.) Now, our Lord Jesus Christ tells us in the gospel that those who are indifferent to the true religion—not caring to know it, and to listen to his apostles and their lawful successors, are far more guilty in the sight of God, and shall, on this account, be more severely judged than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Whosoever shall not receive you (the Apostles) nor hear your words, going forth out of that house, or city, shake off even the dust from your feet for a testimony against them. Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city." (Matt., x., 14, 15, and Luke, ix., 5.)

This severe judgment is executed even here below upon those who are guilty of the sin of indifference to the true religion. Their prayer, says the Lord, is an abomination. "He who turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayers shall be an abomination." (Prov., xxviii., 9.)

St. Paul tells us in plain words, in what the judgment consists which God passes and executes upon those who are indifferent to the true religion. He says that "those who did not like to have the knowledge of God (of the true religion) were delivered up by God to a reprobate sense to do such things as are unbecoming, to become filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, hateful to God, proud, haughty, inventors of

evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy." (Rom., i., 28-32.)

Now as there is and can be but one true religion, all the others must be false, must be opposed to God and hateful to him. Now that which is false and opposed to God cannot be good. Consequently it is false to say that all religions are good.

To maintain that all religions are good, is to maintain that truth and falsehood are equally pleasing to God; that God is just as well pleased with those who *blaspheme* him as with those who *honor* him. That to adore the devil is just as pleasing to God, as to adore the living and true God himself. Who can swallow such monstrous absurdities?

There is a man. He is a notorious liar, a perjurer, a thief, a wretch without honor, without principle, and without morals. Now can you love and respect that man just as much as the man who is truthful, honest, and virtuous? Would you introduce that perjured wretch into your family? Would you allow him to associate with your pure wife, with your beautiful and virtuous daughters?

Now if you love truth and virtue, does not God love them more? If you hate falsehood and crimes, does not God hate them more? Now the more precious a thing is in itself, the more dangerous, the more hateful is its counterfeit. A one hundred dollar counterfeit note is more dangerous than a ten dollar counterfeit note. Now the true religion is the most precious gift that God has bestowed on man. Consequently a counterfeit or caricature of it must be most hateful to God.

Why did God forbid idolatry so strictly in the Old Law;—why did he punish idolaters so severely,—why did he even exterminate so many nations for practising it, if all religions are equally good and pleasing to God?

What need was there for Jesus Christ to come down from heaven to become man, to suffer and die on a cross, all in order to establish the true religion—what need, I say, was there of all this if all religions are equally good, equally pleasing to God?

“But,” some one will say, “at least all the Christian denominations are good.”

“All the Christian denominations?” How many denominations are there? And among all these, how many hold the same doctrines? How many of them hold even the same doctrines they held a few years ago? What one of them believes in, the others reject. What one of them believed in yesterday, he rejects to-day. Show me *one* doctrine in which all the sects agree.

Now, do you mean to say that Christ, who is God, can be the author of all these wrangling sects? God is the author of peace and unity. The devil alone is the author of wrangling sects, the promoter of discord.

Can you believe that it is equally good, equally pleasing to God to adore Jesus as the living God, as we all do, or to hold that he is a mere man as do the Unitarians?

All the truths of religion have been revealed by God. Now, do you mean to say that God would reveal one truth to one class of men, and reveal the opposite to another class?

The Son of God became man precisely in order to establish the true religion, a perfect religion, free from all doubt and error. He taught and labored for thirty-three years. He founded a Church, committed to her care *all*

his doctrines, and his sacraments. He sent to his Church, the Holy Spirit to remain with her *always*, and teach her *all* truth. He promised that he himself would remain with his Church all days even to the end of the world.

The Son of God sent his Apostles to preach to every nation *all* that he had taught. He confirmed those doctrines by numberless miracles. He sealed these doctrines with his own blood; he sealed them with the blood of millions of *glorious* martyrs. And yet you will tell me, after all this, after all that God has done to teach men the true faith, it matters little what a man believes. Jesus Christ says: "He that will not believe shall be damned, and you say, "he will not be damned at all, for all religions are good." What then do you make of Jesus Christ? Will you dare assert that Jesus Christ told a lie?

"If all religions are good," then there is no such thing as heresy. And yet St. Paul warns us against heresy. He classes heresy with wilful murder and adultery. He says that the heretic shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Even the apostle of love, St. John, forbids us to associate with a heretic.

If all religions are good, what need was there of so many councils, even from the days of the apostles down to the present? Why has the Church struggled so long against heretics and innovators? Why has she fought and bled, and suffered so bravely for the perfect maintenance of the truth? If all religions are good, then all those martyrs who poured out their blood like water for the true faith, were fools; then all those converts—Dr. Brownson, Mary of Ripon, Dr. Ives, and so many others, who have sacrificed everything for the true faith, were fools; then all those Catholics in Ireland and elsewhere, who suffered and died for the faith, were fools!

If all religions are good, what need is there of your Protestant Churches, and Protestant preachers? What need is there of your bible societies and foreign missionaries?

If all religions are good, why are Protestants, infidels, freemasons and so on, so bitterly opposed to the Catholic Church? Why do they form secret societies sworn to exterminate the church? The Catholic religion is, after all, a religion—and if all religions are good, why then the Catholic religion must be good, and if it be good, why did Martin Luther and the first Protestants leave it?

“As for me I respect every man’s Religion.”

Indeed! Now what does that mean: I respect every man’s religion, or “I respect every religion?” for it is the same thing. A man, who speaks thus means to say: “I believe that all religions are doubtful,” or “There is no absolutely true religion on earth,” or “The question of religion is one of very little importance.”

Those who make use of this expression: “I respect every man’s religion,” look upon themselves as learned men, and pride themselves on their generosity and toleration. But in reality they are men of very shallow minds, and as for their learning:

“’Tis deep as the sky in a lake,
Till the mire at six inches reveals the mistake.”

I ask you what kind of brains must that man have who tells you coolly that he respects or accepts two propositions exactly the reverse, aye, the very contradiction of each other?

Philosophy comes from two Greek words meaning “love of wisdom,” i. e. love of truth. Now the man that loves and respects falsehood, can certainly be no philos-

opher. True charity forbids us to despise those who are in error; on the contrary, it teaches us to pity and love them. But there is an infinite difference between loving those in error, and loving the error itself; there is an infinite difference between loving the sinner, and loving his *sins*.

To say: "I respect or esteem all religions," is not only unreasonable, but even blasphemous, for, by it, you assert that you esteem that which God abhors—you respect and esteem falsehood.

Whenever you meet any of those men who, boastingly declares that he respects all religions, take a good look at him. If he is one of those grown up children, so common at the present day, who merely repeat what they have heard without understanding its meaning, then pity him from your heart and correct him kindly. If he is, however, one of those arrant knaves—an agent of some secret society, tear off the mask at once from his brow and show him in all his hideous deformity—the enemy of man the enemy of God!

The man without religion pretends to be a philosopher. He tells you he is above the ignorant prejudices of the vulgar. Now the man without religion is certainly no philosopher. He can lay no claim whatever to true solid learning. The greatest pagan philosophers that we have any knowledge of were undoubtedly Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Now these men spent nearly their whole lives in studying the questions: "What is the soul? What becomes of us after death? What is God?" and so on. In a word, they studied continually those very questions that religion teaches us. To be indifferent to religion, then, is to be indifferent to all true philosophy.

The man without religion is in reality but little higher than the beast of the field. To be indifferent to religion is to be indifferent to the highest and noblest truths that can occupy the human mind, the relations between God and man, between this life and the next; the evils we must avoid and the good we must gain. Doubt concerning such truths is the death of the intellect, but indifference with regard to such vital truths, shows that a man's intellect must indeed be on a level with the brute.

What are you to think of a lawyer who tells you it is indifferent to him whether he wins his case or not. What are you to think of a doctor who assures you he is quite indifferent whether his patient recovers or not? What are you to think of a general who tells you that he cares little whether he conquers or is defeated?

Now the man who is indifferent with regard to religion is even far more blameworthy.

Moreover, the man who boasts that he has no religion insults the good and holy God who made man to know, love and serve him; he insults that God who, as our Creator and Lord, has a perfect claim to our entire worship and obedience. What would you think of the woman who boasts that it is indifferent to her whether she lives with her husband or with another?

What would you think of a son who boasts that he has no more respect for his father than he has for his enemy?

Now the man who boasts of his religious indifference is a thousand times worse. He has as much respect for the synagogue of satan as he has for the church of Christ; as much respect for the false inventions of bad priests as he has for the doctrines of Christ and the Apostles.

A certain infidel once boasted in company that he had

no religion. "O," said the gentleman of the house, "there are others here who are afflicted in the same way." "Who are they?" asked the infidel. "Why, our dogs and our horses," answered the gentleman. "Only these poor brutes have sense enough not to boast of their misfortune."

Nay, the infidel is even worse than the beast. He resembles the very demons of hell. They, too, refuse to worship God. They, too, hate and deny God. Yet with all this the infidel pretends to be a man of sense, a man of learning. He pretends to have made a more thorough study of religion than the very priests and doctors of the Church who have devoted their whole life to this sacred subject.

21. What is liberalism?

Liberalism is to be Catholic with the Pope and liberal with the government.

From the time of the Apostles the true followers of Christ have been called Catholics. The meaning of this appellation has always been that they belonged to the One, Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. The term "Catholic" has always distinguished them from every heretical sect. They were known by this term in every part of the world.

Within the few last years, however, certain persons have arisen who are not satisfied with the name of Catholic. Hence they call themselves "Liberal Catholics." If asked in what they differ from Catholics, they answer: "Our motto is: Catholic with the Pope, but liberal with the government."

Liberal Catholics falsely assert, "that it is a mistake to protect and foster religion, because religion," they say,

“will flourish much better if left alone; that the world has entered a new phase, and has begun to run a new course, and consequently the Church should accommodate herself to the spirit of the age; that religion has nothing to do with politics; that it has to do only with the private lives of men; that religion must keep inside the church—that it is meant for Sundays alone; that we must be generous in our religious feelings toward non-Catholics; that a Catechism, therefore, in which every truth, taught by the Church, is set forth in its full bearing, is not fit to be put in the hands of our children, because it is calculated to repel the children of non-Catholics, and alienate their feelings, and to make religious fanatics of our good children,” and the like.

A liberal Catholic, therefore, is a compound of true and false principles. He has two consciences: one for his public, and another for his private life. The motto, “Catholic with the Pope, but liberal with the government,” has for its basis the infidel doctrine of the separation of the Church from the state; of the spiritual from the temporal,—a doctrine condemned by Pious IX., in the fifty-fifth proposition of the Syllabus. This doctrine tends to put the State above the Church, as if the State were the omnipotent ruler of all things, the teacher of truth, the fountain of right, the source of law, and the interpreter of the truths of faith.

In the eighteenth proposition of the Syllabus, all the false principles of liberalism, of progress, and of modern civilization, are declared to be irreconcilable with the Catholic faith.

On the 18th of June, 1871, Pope Pius IX., in replying to a French deputation headed by the Bishop of Nevers,

spoke as follows: "My children, my words must express to you what I have in my heart. That which afflicts your country, and prevents it from meriting the blessings of God, is the mixture of principles: I will speak out, and not hold my peace. That which I fear is not the Commune of Paris, those miserable men, those real demons of hell, roaming upon the face of the earth—no, not the Commune of Paris; that which I fear is liberal Catholicism. . . . I have said so more than forty times, and I repeat it to you now, through the love that I bear you. The real scourge of France is liberal Catholicism, which endeavors to unite two principles, as repugnant to each other as fire and water. My children, I conjure you to abstain from those doctrines which are destroying you. . . . if this error be not stopped, it will lead to the ruin of religion and of France." In a brief, dated July the 9th, 1871, to Mgr. Ségur, the Holy Father says: "It is not only the infidel sects that are conspiring against the Church and society which the Holy See has often reprov'd, but also those men who, granting that they act in good faith and with upright intentions, yet err in caressing liberal doctrines." On July 28, 1873, his Holiness thus expressed himself: "The members of the Catholic Society of Quimper certainly run no risk of being turned away from their obedience to the Apostolic See by the writings and efforts of the declared enemies of the Church; but they may glide down the incline of those so-called liberal opinions which have been adopted by many Catholics, otherwise honest and pious, who, by the influence of their religious character, may easily exercise a powerful ascendancy over men, and lead them to very pernicious opinions. Tell, therefore, the members of the Catholic

Society that, on the numerous occasions on which we have censured those who hold liberal opinions, we did not mean those who hate the Church, whom it would have been useless to reprove, but those whom we have just described. Those men preserve and foster the hidden poison of liberal principles, which they sucked as the milk of their education, pretending that those principles are not infected with malice, and cannot interfere with religion ; so they instil this poison into men's minds, and propagate the germs of those perturbations by which the world has for a long time been vexed."

A liberal Catholic, then, is no true Catholic. The word Catholic is no vain and empty word. To be a true Catholic means to hold most firmly all those truths which Christ and his apostles have taught, which the Catholic Church has always proclaimed, which the saints have professed, which the popes and councils have defined, and which the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have defended. He who denies but one of those truths, or hesitates to receive one of them, is not a Catholic. He claims to exercise the right of private judgment in regard to the doctrine of Christ, and therefore he is a heretic. The true Catholic knows and believes that there can be no compromise between God and the devil, between truth and error, between orthodox faith and heresy. St. Stephen, the first martyr, was no compromiser. When accused of being a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, he, in his turn, accused his enemies of being the murderers of Christ. All the holy martyrs of the Church were no compromisers. Being charged by the heathens with the folly of worshipping and following a crucified God, they, in their turn, charged the heathens with the impiety of wor-

shipping creatures, and following the devil. Why became our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX., a prisoner? It was because he was not, and could not be, a compromiser. Why are, at this time, so many bishops and priests exiled or in prison? It is because they are no compromisers. Why is the Catholic Church persecuted in Germany and other parts of the world? It is because God, by means of persecution, purifies his Church from liberal or compromising Catholics. And as there are so many liberal Catholics in this country, persecution must come to separate them from the Church.

The good Catholic knows and understands that the Catholic Church never has required, nor will require, a particular form of civil government; for she has lived with the Venetian aristocracy, with the Swiss democracy, with the mixed aristocracy and democracy of Genoa, with the British and the United States constitutions, and with many absolute monarchies. But he knows, at the same time, that no form of government, no times and circumstances, can change the doctrine and constitution of the Church, because they are divine, immutable, and everlasting. The good Catholic, therefore, is always in readiness to obey, in all things, the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, the holy Roman Catholic Church. The well-instructed Catholic knows that between Jesus Christ and his Spouse, the Church, there is but one and the same Spirit, who governs and directs us all to our salvation,—that same Spirit and Lord who one day gave the law on Mount Sinai, and who now rules and governs the holy Church. This firm adhesion to every truth of the Church distinguishes the true Catholic from the liberal Catholic, as well as from all Protestants, from all schismatics, from

all heretics. When Protestants abandoned the Church—the guardian of divine truth—they gave themselves up to hundreds of errors: Good Catholics, on the contrary, keeping, as they do, in the footsteps of the Church, and humbly submitting to all her doctrines, retain within themselves the principle of truth and of divine certainty. They feel assured that what the Church orders, is ordered by Jesus Christ; and that what the Church forbids, is also forbidden by Jesus Christ.

The principle of heresy is the principle of rebellion against the Church, and against every lawful authority on earth. The principle of the Church, on the contrary, is to be submissive to every lawful authority. The essential principle of politics and of life is ardently to love the Church, profoundly to revere the Church, unhesitatingly to submit to the Church, and to be most closely united with the Church. Our Lord asks of us no other submission; he requires of us no other faith than that which the Church teaches. His will and his truth are made known in the Church. As he and his father are one, so also he and his Church are one. No one can, in truth, call God his Father, who does not look upon the Church as his mother.

In the Church alone there are certainty and security against error. Around this Rock we behold nothing but raging tempests, nothing but disastrous shipwrecks, indifference to religion, negation of all worship, the abomination of atheism and immorality, derision of holy things. a fanatic pietism, a delirious religiousness, rationalism, or the denial of all revelation and of everything supernatural. Every non-Catholic who earnestly seeks to learn what he is to believe, every one who yearns to obtain certainty in religious matters, must sooner or later turn to the Church

as the only source of certainty, the only guardian of the true religion, the only fountain of true peace and happiness in life and in death.

22. How do we worship God by hope ?

By confiding in his promises that he will grant us : 1, the pardon of our sins ; 2, final perseverance in his grace ; and, 3, the everlasting glory of Paradise.

Many years ago a strange sight, a singular contrast, might have been witnessed in the rich Eastern city of Babylon. Throughout the streets and public places of that populous city, the inhabitants might be seen feasting, singing, and rejoicing. Everywhere, whithersoever you turned, you could behold signs of triumph and gladness. But see ! in the midst of this rejoicing there is one spot in which sadness reigns. Upon the banks of Babylon's streams a vast multitude is assembled. There you see strong men borne down by sorrow. There you see feeble women pining away with grief. There are old men whose hoary heads are bowed down with sadness ; you see little children languishing in pain. The faces of all are pallid ; their eyes are filled with tears. They rest their wearied limbs beneath the shade of the mournful cypress. Their harps, their musical instruments, hang sadly upon the branches of the willow. No hand is raised to touch them, no finger evokes sweet music from their chords. They are silent ; they are neglected. There nought is heard save the sighs, the moans, the sobs of the multitude, as they blend confusedly with the murmur, the dash of the stream. Nought is seen save the tears that trickle down from their eyelids and blend with the flood. Ah ! let us draw near those poor unhappy creatures ! Let us ask them the cause of their

tears. Perhaps their feet are loaded with chains, or their hands bound by cruel manacles? No, they are not chained—this is not the cause of their grief.

Are they, perhaps, needy, suffering from the bitter pangs of hunger; or are they crushed and down-trodden—condemned to hard labor, to degrading servitude? Are these, perhaps, the cause of their grief? Ah! no; these are not the cause of their tears. They weep, they are heart-broken, because they are exiles; because they are far, far away from their home, their native land. This, this alone is the cause of their tears.

How mournful are the days of exile! How sweet it is to breathe once more the air of our native land! The bread of the stranger, like the bread of the wicked, is bitter to the heart. The streams of a foreign land may murmur in soothing tones, but, oh! they speak an unknown tongue. The birds in foreign lands may sing sweetly, but they want one melodious note—they do not sing to us of home. The scenes in other lands may be wildly fair, but, oh! they have not that sweet, that soothing charm which endears every object in our native land.

Ah! we are poor exiles here below, far away from heaven, our true home; we, therefore, constantly suffer the pain of exile. We are never satisfied in this world. We always crave for something more, something higher, something better? Whence is this continual restlessness which haunts us through life, and ever pursues us to the grave? It is the home-sickness of the soul. It is the soul's craving after God.

It is God who made our heart, and he made it for himself. When man first came forth from the hand of God, his heart turned to God naturally, and he loved creatures

only as loving keepsakes of God. But sin and death came into the world. The heart of man was defiled and degraded. He turned away from the pure and holy love of God, and sought for love and happiness amid creatures. But our heart seeks in vain among creatures. Our heart is small indeed, but its love is immense, It can find rest only in God. Whatever we love out of God brings only pain and bitter disappointment.

There is always an aching void in our heart—a void which cannot be filled by father or mother, by brother or sister or our dearest friend—it can be filled by God alone; and he will fill it in heaven to the fullest extent of our desires, for there we shall possess him, the source of all happiness.

“We shall see him as he is.” (1 St. John, iii., 2.) During this life, the soul cannot see God. And the Lord said to Moses who wished to see the face of God: “Thou canst not see my face, for no man shall see me and live.” (Exod., xxxiii., 20.) As long as the soul remains united to the body it is embarrassed by the flesh; it cannot conceive anything without the help of sensible images. But no object that strikes the senses can represent the Divine Essence. The soul, therefore, to be enabled to contemplate this Essence, which is invisible to mortal eye, must be delivered from the shackles of the body. It is only then that it comprehends what is spiritual without having recourse to sensible images.

The more the soul controls the senses, the more able it is to comprehend things of a spiritual nature. Hence, God generally makes his revelations, and gives the spirit and gift of prophecy to holy persons whilst they are in ecstasy or asleep, because in that state the senses are less

active and leave the spiritual faculties of the soul more free to receive spiritual communications and divine impressions. If we, then, in our simple, natural state, cannot rise to supernatural things, much less can we, in this state, conceive the knowledge of the Divine Essence. The most enlightened of interpreters of Holy Scriptures, and many Fathers of the Church are of opinion that Moses and St. Paul saw God face to face, and contemplated the Divinity, but this was by supernatural grace, and a miracle which exempted them from the laws of nature. God granted them that extraordinary privilege and preëminent sanctity, in order to proclaim his power, wisdom, and glory to the world by the holy ministry of two inspired men, who were to be—the one the deliverer and law-giver of the Hebrew people, and the other the zealous and faithful doctor of the Gentiles. “To me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery which had been hidden from eternity in God, who created all things; that the manifold wisdom of God may be known to the principalities and powers of the heavenly mansions through the Church.” (Eph., iii., 8–10.)

To see the Divine Essence is something far above the faculties of the human soul, nay it is something even far above the natural faculties of an angel. The soul, therefore, must be prepared for the contemplation of the Divinity.

If we wish that a thing should produce an effect which is above its nature, we must carefully prepare it for the production of such an effect. If, for instance, we wish to

set the air on fire, we must gradually raise its temperature. In like manner God must prepare the soul to make his Essence accessible to its intelligence. This he does by bestowing upon it here below the inestimable gift of true faith, hope and charity. Those who leave this world, endowed with these divine virtues, are prepared to see God in a created light, called the light of glory.

As the intellectual faculty of the soul is too feeble to withstand the splendor of the Divinity, God moderates the intensity of the rays of glory. This temperate light increases the intellectual powers of the saints, and renders them capable of contemplating, in all its splendor and brightness, that Eternal Sun which was before too dazzling for their sight.

However we must not say that the light of glory is intermedial between God and the saints. It is but a means to enable them to stand the divine Presence. "This light of glory shines for ever in the City of the saints," (Apos., xx1., 23.) and makes them like God, for they see him face to face. (John, xx1., 23.)

All the saints, however, have not an equal knowledge of God. This knowledge is in proportion to their merit; and therefore their glory is not the same. "One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars; for star differeth from star in glory." (2 Cor., xv., 41.)

Now, this inequality does not consist in this that one saint resembles God more than another, for in God there is neither form nor image. This inequality consists in this that the light of glory shines more brilliantly on some than on others, and enables their intellectual faculties to behold the Divine Essence in proportion to the brilliancy with which it shines upon them.

Now, the lustre of this light is in proportion to the degree of charity in which the saints, after their death, appear before God. Divine love begets, in the soul of the just man, an ardent desire to possess God—the object of his love, and disposes it to have free and easy access to him. Hence, the greater our charity is, when we die the more brilliant will be the light of glory that will shine upon us for all eternity. It is then not the wealthiest, nor the highest in power and honor, nor the most learned, but the greatest in the love of God that are the happiest in the kingdom of heaven.

God is an infinite ocean of light, delight, and happiness. Into this ocean of happiness the soul of the just man enters when the Lord says: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt., xxv., 23.) Our Lord does not say that his joy and happiness is to enter into his servant, but that his faithful servant is to enter into his joy. Were we told to receive into ourselves all the water of the sea, we should say: "How can this be done? It is utterly impossible." But were we bade to plunge into the water of the sea, we should see no impossibility in this. Now, our Lord is an infinite ocean of joy and happiness. It is impossible for the soul to receive this happiness all into herself, but most easy for her to enter into this ocean of happiness when our Lord tells her: "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter into the joy of thy Lord." In the very instant that the soul hears these words, she sees, by the light of glory, the infinite beauty of God, face to face; she is at once filled, and, as it were, all consumed with love; she is lost and immersed in that boundless

ocean of the goodness of God ; she forgets herself, passing over into God and dissolving into him ; the Lord communicates himself substantially to her, giving himself up to her in a manner most sweet and intimate. On this account St. John says : "Behold the tabernacle of God with men ; and he will dwell with them : and they shall be his people, and God himself, with them, shall be their God." (Apoc., xxi., 3) ; "He that shall overcome shall possess these things : and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Xxi., 7.)

This everlasting happiness and glory of Paradise, the eternal possession and enjoyment of God, is the primary object of our hope. But, as the everlasting enjoyment of God can be obtained only by supernatural means, these means : are the *secondary* object of our hope. These means are : the pardon of our sins, the assistance of God's grace, and the gift of perseverance in the grace of God.

Now, our hope, to possess God for all eternity in the world to come, and to obtain, here below, all the graces necessary to put us in possession of everlasting happiness, must, like faith, be firm and unwavering.

Our faith is firm because it rests upon a supernatural motive or foundation—the truth of God. Our hope, then, to be firm and unwavering, must also rest upon supernatural motives. These motives are : 1, the *power* of God, by which he is able to save us ; 2, the *mercy* of God, by which he wishes to save us ; and 3, the *faithfulness* of God to his promises to save us, if we ask him to save us through the merits of Jesus Christ. Behold the promise : "Amen, amen, I say to you : if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." (John, xvi., 23.)

1. As God is all powerful, he is able to save us. By

his power, he made the heavens to give us light and rain, the fire to give us warmth, the air to preserve our lives, the earth to produce various kinds of fruit, the sea to give us fish, the animals to give us food and clothing; by his power, he became man for us, lived and died for us, changes bread and wine into his body and blood to become the food of our soul.

By this same power, he can deliver us from darkness and blindness of the understanding in spiritual things, from attachment to sensual pleasures, from our sins and punishments due to them. By his power he changed in a moment, the heart of Saul, and made him from a persecutor of the Christians, a most zealous defender and propagator of the Gospel. By his power, God changed the heart of the good thief, of St. Augustine, of St. Mary of Egypt, of St. Margaret of Cortona, and of thousands of other notorious sinners, and made them models of virtue and ornaments of the Church. By his power, "God is able of the stones to raise up children to Abraham." (Matt., iv., 9.) "The hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save." (Isai. lix., 1.)

2. Our hope rests also upon the goodness and mercy of God. His goodness is as great as his power. God takes delight in using his power to show us his goodness and mercy. He is a Father, and to a father nothing is more peculiar than the great yearning of communicating to his children himself and all his goods as far as possible. In our heavenly Father, that yearning is infinite; it is quite essential to his nature; and therefore he wishes to save us and share his own happiness in heaven for all eternity.

We are his children, and the laws of all nations, in accordance with those of nature, grant to children a holy

right to their father's goods, especially so if these were given him to be transmitted by him to his children.

One day a poor man, called Peter, went to his friend Paul, and spoke to him of his great poverty. "My dear friend," said Peter, "do you not know anyone who could help me?" "Yes, I do," replied Paul; "go to Mr Bonus, a rich nobleman; he will help you." "I am afraid," said Peter, "he will not receive me." "You need not be afraid," said Paul, "because this nobleman is goodness, liberality, and charity itself; he receives every one that comes to him, with the greatest affability. Some time ago he issued a proclamation, in which he declared that he was the father of the poor, inviting all to come and tell him their wants. He never feels happier than when he bestows alms upon the poor. He is exceedingly rich. He had a dearly beloved son, to whom he bequeathed all his possessions; but his son died a short time after, and on his death-bed willed all his property to the poor, and made his father the executor of his will. Now, this good father considers himself bound in conscience to distribute this property to the poor. There is no reason, then, why you should fear to call on him; you will certainly receive as much as you need." These words filled the heart of Peter with great hope and confidence; he went to see the rich nobleman, and received what he asked of him.

Now, we are all like this poor man. We are in want of many things; we need especially the grace of God; we need the gift of perseverance in the friendship of Almighty God in order to obtain heaven. The grace of God and perseverance in it are the objects of our hope. How much are we not strengthened in this hope by the remembrance that in all our wants we can have recourse to a Lord who

is far more compassionate, and infinitely richer than the kind-hearted nobleman of whom I have spoken. This good Lord is our Heavenly Father. He has issued a proclamation, recorded in Holy Scripture: "Every one who asks receiveth." (Luke, xiii., 10.) And "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matt., xxi., 22.) God the Father also gave everything to his Divine Son Jesus: "All things are delivered up to me by my Father." (Matt., xxi., 27.) His Son Jesus died, and made us heirs to all his graces and merits. His heavenly Father considers us as his dear children, who may, in justice, lay claim to the merits and graces of his Divine Son, who called our special attention to this right of ours when he said: "If you ask the Father anything in *my Name*, he will give it to you." (John, xvi., 23.) He means to say: You must represent to your heavenly Father that he is your Father, and that you are his children, and have as such, according to all divine and human laws, a claim upon all his goods. This claim of yours is so much the stronger as I have acquired it by my Passion and Death.

3. Finally, our hope rests upon *God's faithfulness* to his promise to grant us whatever we ask of him in the name of Jesus Christ.

"The power and mercy of God," says St. Alphonsus, "are indeed strong motives for hope, but the strongest of all motives is God's fidelity to his promise, because, though we believe that God is infinite in power and mercy, nevertheless we could not have the unwavering certainty that God will save us unless he himself had given us the certain promise to do so, provided we ask him to save us. As God gives the grace of prayer to

every one, no one can reasonably fear to be lost if he perseveres in prayer. As for myself, I never feel greater consolation, nor greater assurance of my salvation, than when I am praying to God and recommending myself to him. And I think the same must happen to every other Christian. There are several signs by which we can become certain of our salvation, but there is none so certain as prayer, for we know with infallible certainty that God will hear him who prays with confidence and perseverance."

Among the praises given by the saints to Abraham, St. Paul ranks this above all the rest, that "*against hope he believed in hope,*" (Rom., iv., 18.) God had promised him to multiply his posterity like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. To try his hope, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice to him his only son; but Abraham did not, on that account, give up hope. He believed that, to obey the command was no reason why God would fail to keep his word.

Great, indeed, was his hope; for he saw nothing on which to rest except the word of God. Oh! how true and solid a foundation is that word! for it is infallible.

But here one might say: "Eternal life depends on perseverance in the grace of God. As this perseverance is uncertain, eternal life is uncertain; and this uncertainty of eternal life makes us doubt the divine promises to be saved through the merits of Jesus Christ." To this objection St. Alphonsus replies: "The divine promises can never fail. Hence we can never have any reason on the part of God, to doubt that he will be wanting by denying what he promised us. The doubt and fear is on our part, for we may be found wanting by transgressing

the divine commandments, and thus losing God's grace. In this case, God is not obliged to fulfil his promises, but has reason to punish us for our infidelity. St. Paul, therefore, exhorts us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil., ii., 12.) Hence we are certain of salvation if we remain faithful to God. But if we are unfaithful, we should dread our perdition.

But does not this fear and, uncertainty destroy the peace of conscience ?

“Peace of conscience in this life, does not consist in a certain belief that we shall be saved, for this is not what God promises us, but peace of conscience consists rather in the hope that he will save us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, if we strive to lead a life in conformity with his commandments, and endeavor, *by prayer*, to obtain the divine assistance to persevere in a holy life.” (History of Heresies, Refut., xi., 47.)

Suppose God reveals to a person the decree of his damnation ; on account of the fore knowledge he has of his sin, should that person give up hope ? “No,” says St. Thomas, “for such a revelation should not be looked upon as an irrevocable decree, but as a threat which would be carried into effect only when a person perseveres in sin until death.”

This hope is, like faith, necessary for salvation, “for we are saved by hope,” says St. Paul. (Rom., viii., 24.) This virtue is prescribed by the first commandment, which requires us to worship God by faith, hope, and charity. As it is a duty to increase in faith, so it is also a duty to increase in hope.

Now, the virtue of hope is nourished by prayer, good works, the frequent reception of the sacraments, by

devotion to the blessed Mother of God, and by frequent acts of hope.

1. *Hope is nourished and increased by prayer.*

Frequent conversation with a friend will gradually reveal to me his goodness and kindness, and the more I become acquainted with his virtues, the greater will be my confidence to obtain from him what he promises to me.

In like manner, our confidence in God is in proportion to our knowledge of God. Now, one of the best means to become acquainted with God is to be often in his company and converse with him familiarly. This conversation takes place in prayer and in meditation on God's goodness, on his life, passion and death, on his Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. In this holy exercise God makes himself gradually known to the soul, as he promised when he said: "I will manifest myself to him." (John, xiv., 21.) He manifests himself to the soul in prayer by drawing it powerfully, yet sweetly, to himself, and by inspiring it with great confidence in his power, goodness, and fidelity to his promises. If holy Christians have greater confidence in God than ordinary Christians it is because they oftener converse with God, and draw, from this holy conversation, an unlimited confidence in him. Prayer, therefore, is the mother and nurse of hope.

2. *Hope is nourished by good works.*

"Alms," says Holy Scripture, "shall be a great confidence before the Most High God to all those that give it." (Tob., iv., 12.) As we have shown in this volume, when speaking of the corporal works of mercy, how good works increase confidence in God, it is useless to repeat here what has already been explained.

3. *Hope is nourished by the frequent reception of the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance.*

As to the increase of hope by the reception of Holy Communion, we know that the Holy Eucharist is the pledge of our inheritance and has in itself the promise of eternal life. "He that eateth of this bread shall live forever. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me. He shall never hunger or thirst. He shall not die, but have life everlasting, and I will raise him up, on the last day." (St. John, chap. vi., 18.) St. Paul argues that "if we are sons, then we are heirs, heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ;" and elsewhere he says, "that we glory in hope of the glory of God." It is true, that in this life we can never have an infallible assurance of our salvation, but Holy Communion most powerfully confirms and strengthens our hope of obtaining heaven and the graces necessary for living and dying holily. However great the fear and diffidence may be with which our sins inspire us, what soul is not comforted when our Saviour himself enters the heart and seems to say: "Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." "Can I refuse the less—I who have given the greater? Can I withhold any necessary graces who have given myself? Shall I refuse to bring you to reign with me in heaven, who am come down on earth to dwell with you?"

As to the increase of hope by confession, we know that "If our hearts do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God." (1 John, iii., 21.)

In this life, a poor man may be afraid to show himself

before a wealthy lord, an ignorant person may be afraid to appear before a learned man. But neither poverty nor ignorance makes a person afraid to appear before God. It is only sin that inspires us with fear of God, and diminishes our confidence in him. The more we renounce sin, the more increases our confidence in God.

Now, it is in a good confession that we renounce sin, and obtain its forgiveness. See the sinner after a good confession. His countenance is radiant with beauty; his step has become again elastic; he has thrown off the load that bent him to the earth; his soul, being once more free and the companion of angels, reflects even upon his features the holy joy with which it is inebriated; he smiles upon those whom he meets, and every one sees that he is happy. He has again entered that sweet alliance with God, whom he can now justly call his Father; he trembles now no more when he lifts his eyes to heaven; he hopes, he loves; he sees himself reinstated in his lost dignity—he is once more a child of God. Now that his soul rules the body, a supernatural strength animates him; he feels himself burning with zeal and energy to do good; a new sun has risen upon his life, and his soul puts on the freshness of youth.

Now frequent confession increases the peace of mind, confidence in God, lightness of heart; it increases sanctifying grace, devotion and tenderness of the soul, clearness of intellect, purity of conscience; it increases the facility in the performance of good works and all the spiritual gifts which lead the soul confidently to eternal salvation.

4. *Hope is nourished and increased by devotion to the blessed mother of God.*

The blessed Virgin Mary is called our hope. To un-

derstand this, we must make a distinction. God is our principle hope, because he is the author of grace and of every good; and Mary is our hope, because she prays for us to Jesus Christ. Hence St. Bonaventure addresses her in the following words: "Through thee, O first finder of grace, mother of salvation, we have access to the Son, that, through thee, he may receive us, who, through thee, was given to us." The saint means to say that, as we have access to the Father only through Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of justice, so we have access to the Son only through Mary, who is our Mediatrix of grace, and by her prayers obtains for us those graces which Christ merited for us. Oh! how many sinners have returned to God through the intercession of Mary. Being pressed down by the heavy load of their sins, they felt afraid of approaching God in confident prayer; but knowing the great mercy of Mary, and her power with her divine Son Jesus Christ, they had recourse to her who is called the refuge of sinners. She prayed for them, and obtained for them the grace to make a good confession of their sins. They remained devoted to her to the end of their life, and were through her prayers enabled to lead a holy life. The greater our love, the more tender our devotion to Mary is, the more confidence we experience in the goodness of God, and the more firm is our hope to be saved. Mary knows best how necessary great confidence in God is in order to be saved. So she prays to Jesus Christ, and obtains for us the great grace of a firm, unwavering hope in the merits of her divine Son and in his infinite mercy and goodness.

5. *Hope is increased by frequent acts of hope.*

As frequent bad acts weaken the will and incline it

more and more to evil, so good acts strengthen the will and incline it more and more to good. The oftener, therefore, we make acts of hope, the more we confirm the will in this virtue. As the virtue of hope is absolutely necessary for salvation, every Christian should be careful often to make acts of hope.

It is difficult to state precisely how often we are obliged to make the acts of hope. However we may say in general, that we should make them often enough to keep up the habit of hope.

A person is especially obliged to make acts of hope when the promises of God are first proposed to him; also when he is grievously tempted against hope, and when he is at the hour of death.

The holier a Christian is, the oftener he will make acts of hope in God every day, not only for the purpose of nourishing this virtue, but also because he knows that, as by faith he honors the truth of God, so by hope he honors the power and goodness of God and his fidelity to his promises. We read of St. Alphonsus Liguori that he was accustomed to make, every night, ten acts of confidence in Jesus Christ and ten acts of confidence in the blessed Virgin Mary—The virtue of hope in God is one of the most difficult to practise. We should then make use of every means in our power to be more and more strengthened and confirmed in it to the end of our life. Then the Lord will give himself to us as reward for our faith and hope in him in this world, and possessing him for ever, he will no longer be the object of our faith and hope, but only that of our love and joy throughout all eternity.

Such is the ultimate end which the goodness of God wishes us to attain in the other world. Our soul will not

be entirely at rest until it is perfectly united with God in heaven. It is true that those who love Jesus Christ enjoy peace in doing his holy will; but they cannot enjoy perfect peace and happiness in this life, for such peace and happiness are found only in the inseparable possession of God. The soul is restless, sighing and mourning until it is eternally united with God.

The greatest punishment which the souls in purgatory endure, is their desire of possessing God and seeing him face to face. This punishment is inflicted especially on those souls that, in this life, had but a faint desire of Paradise. Cardinal Bellarmin says that there is, in purgatory, a place called the *prison of honor* (*carcer honoratus*) where the souls do not endure the pains of sense, but only the pain of the privation of the vision of God. Many examples of souls suffering this particular kind of punishment are related by St. Gregory, St. Vincent Ferrer, Ven. Bede and St. Bridget.

Now this punishment is inflicted on souls, not for sins committed, but for having had little desire of heaven during their life on earth. Many souls, it is true, endeavor to become perfect, yet they entertain hardly any desire of leaving this world in order to be intimately united with God. But as eternal life is an infinitely precious blessing, merited by the death of Jesus Christ, God punishes, in an especial manner, those souls that had but a faint desire of heaven during their earthly career.

23. What are the sins against hope ?

1, *Despair, or utter want of confidence in God's mercy; 2, Presumption, or an unfounded confidence in God's mercy.*

God is a most merciful father. There is nothing more

peculiar to him than to be merciful and to spare. He delights far more in manifesting his mercy than his power or wisdom, or any other of his divine attributes. Had man not fallen, God could not have manifested his mercy. Mercy shines most brilliantly where there is misery.

There is a man. He is very wealthy, wise and learned, and at the same time very kind and charitable. For his wealth, wisdom and learning he will be admired; but it is only his kindness and charity that draw the hearts of all men to him.

God knows that disposition of our hearts. He knows that we admire his power and wisdom. But he also knows that we feel greatly drawn towards him by his goodness and mercy. He made us for himself, and therefore he declares in holy Scripture that his delight is to be with the children of men. Hence, to make us come to him, he has tried, from the beginning of the world, to draw us by acts of charity and mercy.

No sooner had Adam sinned than he went after him, called him back from his evil way, pardoned him on account of the Redeemer whom he promised to send to repair his fault, and was ever afterwards kind and merciful to him.

To show that he does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he may be converted and live, he invariably seeks him first, and invites him to repentance by remorse of conscience.

If he is not listened to by the sinner, he waits for his return, and gives him many graces to repent and be reconciled to him.

And who can describe the joy of the Lord at the return of the sinner from his evil ways?

To spare the sinner our heavenly Father has not spared his only-begotten Son, but delivered him up to the most cruel death upon the cross.

He has promised most solemnly that on the day on which the sinner returns to him he shall be forgiven, and his sins shall no longer be remembered, and that there will be great rejoicing in heaven on account of his conversion. Innumerable, indeed, are the ways by which God has shown how good and merciful he is to every sinner, in spite of all his crimes, if he is ready to renounce his sinful career. He says, that "even though his sins were as red as scarlet, as numerous as the sand on the sea-shore, and as black as ink, he shall be made whiter than snow if he returns to me."

Now, to doubt this mercy of God, to despair of it and say with Cain, who killed his brother, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon," (Gen., iv., 13,) is one of the greatest sins.

To despair of God's mercy is as much as to believe that his mercy is not infinite, that it can be exhausted by the number and greatness of sins, that the merits of Jesus Christ are not infinite, not sufficient to cancel all sins and obtain the forgiveness of all. Who then does not see that this sin of despair is one of the greatest outrages that can be offered to the infinite mercy of God, and to his fidelity in keeping his promise to pardon every sinner who returns to him. Ah, I venture to say, that if the sins of a man despairing of God's mercy were weighed, and the sin of his despair were put in one scale, and all the rest in the other, the sin of despair would appear heavier than all his other sins. God feels more outraged by this sin alone than by a million of others.

It is true, the sin of infidelity is greater than that of despair. He who despairs puts only limits to God's mercy, but does not deny or wish to destroy it, whilst the infidel denies and wishes to annihilate it. However, should an infidel repent of his crime, but begin to despair of God's mercy on account of the enormity of his sin, he would displease God more by despairing of his mercy than he did by his sin of infidelity.

Hope encourages us to practise virtue, keeps us from evil ways, and checks the torrent of the passions; but despair prevents us from doing good, and throws us into all sorts of sins according to the words of the Apostle: "who in despair have given themselves up to lust, avarice and all sorts of corruption." (Eph., iv., 19.)

As the sin of despair is one of the greatest outrages that can be offered to God, and is so fatal in its effects upon the soul, we should be careful to guard against preparing the way to it.

He who begins to gratify the temptations of the flesh, soon loses all relish for spiritual goods. He finds the acquisition of them not only difficult, but altogether impossible. This false notion throws him into a state of spiritual sloth and indolence, or of sadness which enervates the powers of the mind and renders him incapable of any virtuous or meritorious act. This vicious habit begins with a corrupt heart and depraved will, and generally ends in disgust and despair.

But be the sins of a man whatever they may, they never are a sufficient cause of despair. If the sinner asks of our Lord to give him true sorrow for his sins and the grace to return to him with sincerity of heart, he will obtain this grace, and God will forgive him thousands of sins as quick as he forgives one.

Father Lireus relates the following story: A certain young nobleman gave himself up to gambling. In one afternoon he lost all his money, and contracted a great debt besides. Enraged at this loss, he commenced to utter the most frightful blasphemies. "Now, O Jesus Christ!" said he blasphemously, "I am done with thee! I no longer care for thee nor for thy threats; thou canst not make me suffer a greater loss than I have sustained to-day." What happened? In the afternoon of that very day he met with an accident. The carriage in which he was riding home was upset and he broke his leg. The fracture was very bad and brought on a dangerous fever, so much so, that the physicians entertained serious doubts about his recovery. The young man now understood that God was able to make him undergo a still greater loss than that of his money, to wit, his health, and even his life probably. But instead of entering into himself and asking God's pardon, this great sinner blasphemed God more than ever. "God," said he, "Thou rejoicest in showing how it is in Thy power to punish me still more severely. Very well, show me now that Thou canst inflict on me the greatest punishment possible. And since, after the loss of my money, health and life, there is no greater misfortune than that of eternal damnation, show me how it is in Thy power to cast me into hell. If I were Thy God"—horrible to relate, horrible to hear—"if I were thy God, I would do this to thee also!" O most horrible blasphemy! Why was it that hell did not open that very instant to devour so execrable a blasphemer. But God is merciful. As the impious young man in his despair and rage refused to listen to any good advice, God inspired his servant to enter his room and whisper

into his ear the following words: "My lord, there is a good friend of yours here who wishes to take leave of you." "Who is it?" asked the dying sinner; "let him come in." At these words the good servant showed him a crucifix, saying: "Behold, my lord, this is your best friend, who wishes to say a word to you." At that very moment the grace of God touched the heart of the blasphemer, and enlightened him to see his miserable state. He raised his eyes and fixed them on the crucifix. The eyes of the crucifix seemed to become alive, and to cast looks of mercy upon the dying man, and he heard a voice coming forth from the crucifix, saying unto him: "My child, I will show you that it is in my power to do to you what is best and not what is worst. Had I wished to cast you into hell, I could have done so long ago. But no, my child, I will do to you not what is worst, but what is best. You say that were you my God, you would cast me into hell for ever. Now, I am your God—well, I will make you happy with me in heaven for all eternity, although you have not deserved such a mercy." At this voice of mercy the dying sinner took the crucifix into his hands, pressed it to his lips, and shed a torrent of tears; he made a general confession with such contrition of heart that even his confessor could not help weeping. After having received the last Sacraments, he continued to shed bitter tears of sorrow and true love for God, and soon after died in this happy state.

How true are those words that the Lord spoke one day to Blessed Henry Suso. "Imagine," said he to his great servant, "that the whole world was on fire, and then see how quickly a handful of straw cast into it is consumed. But I forgive a repentant sinner a thousand times quicker

than a handful of straw can be burned up in the largest fire." "Ah, yes!" exclaims the holy Curé of Ars, "all the sins ever committed are but a grain of sand beside a huge mountain if compared with the mercy of God." Hence the Lord wishes every priest to tell poor sinners what he one day commanded his prophet to tell them for their encouragement, namely, "Say to the faint-hearted, take courage, and fear not. If the wicked man shall do penance of all his sins, I will no longer remember his iniquities which he hath wrought. Why will ye die? Return ye and live. My children, why will you destroy yourselves, and of your own free will condemn yourselves to everlasting death! Return to me, and you shall live."

Presumption.

Almighty God has promised to save us if we believe and do all that he teaches us through his infallible Church. If we comply with this condition, we shall be saved. But to hope to be saved without complying with this condition is the sin of presumption. Of this sin are guilty:

1. All those who rely too much on the goodness of God—living in their sins, in the vain hope that they will repent before they die—that there is time enough for repentance, that God is merciful and will not suffer them to be lost. We often hear such language; but all those who think and speak in this way are guilty of presumption and are walking fast on the road which leads to hell. They say: "God has not created me to damn me!" But has God created you to offend him? and in drawing you out of nothing, has he engaged to let go unpunished the outrage and insults offered to him by those to whom he has given being and life?

2. The sin of presumption is committed by those who

presume on their own strength, exposing themselves to the danger of offending God, foolishly imagining that by their own strength, endeavors, and resolutions, they can overcome temptations, and subdue their passions. This was the sin of St. Peter, when he said to Christ: "Though all men should be scandalized at Thee, I will never be scandalized." (Mat., xxvi., 33.) This presumption is very often punished by our being abandoned by God, and allowed to fall into some shameful sin, that we may be convinced of our folly, and taught our own weakness and misery, as happened to St. Peter.

3. Those also are guilty of presumption who, living in the dangerous occasions of sin, will not quit those occasions, vainly thinking that they are now so firmly resolved, that they will never again commit the sin to which they are exposed. This is the sin of many Christians who frequent balls and theatres, who read impious and immoral books, who listen to licentious discourses, and at the same time boldly say, "All this makes no impression on me; I know my own strength; no danger is there to me, I am certain." No danger, indeed! As if man were anything else than misery and weakness; as if it were not written: "He who loves the danger shall perish therein." (Eccl., iii., 28.) Ah! how many poor souls, relying too much on their own strength, fall every day into the most shameful crimes! Vain presumption! who can count the crimes and excesses which you bring forth every instant! If you seriously wish to obtain heaven, then enter on the way that leads to heaven. Avoid sin, practise virtue; watch, pray, fly from the occasions of sin, and receive the sacraments of penance and the holy Eucharist frequently; for these are the means by which God wishes us to be saved.

4. Of the sin of presumption are especially guilty all non-Catholics. That their hope of salvation is most presumptuous is evident from the fact that they foolishly imagine to be saved by serving our Lord in the way they are pleased to serve him, whilst our Lord tells us that only those shall enter the kingdom of heaven who have done his will on earth. (Matt., vii., 21.)

Suppose a young lady wishes to get a situation with a wealthy family, on condition that she has full liberty to work when she pleases and in the way she pleases, and that she receives one hundred dollars every month for her house-work. Will any sensible man admit such a foolish presumptuous person into his family? But is not the presumption of a non-Catholic far greater when he expects that God will admit him into heaven after having served him according to his own notion and fancy? What can be more absurd? Our Lord is not only a merciful but also a just God. He is a merciful God to those only who do his will in the way in which he revealed it to his Church. To them alone heaven is promised. But he will be a just God to those who have refused to do his will in the way in which it is taught by his Church. He will tell them: "I never knew you." (Matt., vii., 23.) You have not done my will on earth, but yours. You have imitated Lucifer and his angels, who refused to serve me according to my will. You, therefore, have deserved their punishment. "Depart then from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt., vii., 23.) How foolish then to say: "How could God condemn, to eternal torments, that man who was so kind, so honest in his dealings, so truthful," etc. "Ah!" says St. Thomas Aquinas: "such is the language, of many in the world, of the haughty, presumptuous enemies of faith, hope and charity."

Exterior honesty may, indeed, keep a man out of prison, but it is not sufficient to keep him out of hell. A great deal more is required to enter the kingdom of heaven. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt., vii., 21.) This will of God is found, taught, and explained only in the true Church of Jesus Christ—the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore "let him who does not hear the Church, be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matt., xviii., 17.)

24. How do we worship God by charity ?

By loving God above all things for his own sake ; and our neighbor as ourselves, for the love of God.

We have already explained what is to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. We will speak, therefore, only of the sins against charity.

25. What are the sins against charity ?

All mortal sins in general, but, in particular ; 1, indifference and aversion to God and divine things ; and, 2, hatred and repugnance to his fatherly dispensations.

We sin against the love of God by every sin, because in committing sin we disobey the commandments of God, and so render ourselves displeasing to him. If we have charity, or a true and sincere love of God, we will have a great fear of displeasing him. We see that children who really love their parents are exceedingly careful to avoid whatever may be displeasing to them, and are most attentive to do anything that is agreeable to their will and inclination. In like manner, if we have a real

and sincere love of God, we shall feel it a duty and a pleasure to do everything that pleases him, and we shall be most careful to avoid every sin, even the most venial; for the lightest sin is a disobedience to God's commands, which is displeasing in his eyes.

But it is particularly by mortal sin that we sin against the love of God, for mortal sin not only lessens our love for God, but it destroys altogether that love, and causes a total separation between ourselves and God. When we commit a mortal sin, we prefer our own pleasures, and the gratification of our passions, to God. In committing mortal sin, we virtually tell God that we have no respect for his commands—that we care very little about his admonitions—that we make no account of his promises—that we are indifferent to his rewards or punishments, and that we will do what our inclinations suggest, no matter how displeasing it may be to him. Ah, can there be any insult equal to that offered to God by mortal sin? Let us then carefully guard against so crying an evil; let us be ever watchful against the approaches of a monster so frightful, and always pray that we may never be so wicked as to sin against the love of God by mortal sin.

Although it be true that every mortal sin is opposed to charity, yet the sin more particularly opposed to it is hatred to God. But is it possible for one to hate God, the eternal source of all goodness and mercy?

Hatred proceeds from a perverse will. But how does it happen that the will of a person becomes so perverse as to hate God? The will is generally inclined to the object which is presented to it by the intellect. Now, the intellect may represent God to the will in a two-fold manner; it may represent him such as he is in himself—he

essence and source of all beauty and goodness, and it may represent God as he is in his external operations.

Now, the will cannot conceive hatred to God when the intellect represents him as the source of all beauty and goodness, for it is natural to love and admire what is beautiful and good.

The will, however, may conceive hatred to God when the intellect represents him in his external operations—in the temporal and eternal punishment which he inflicts on sinners. This kind of hatred to God is the consequence of pride and sin, which are always contrary to charity and divine justice. “The pride of them that hate thee, ascendeth continually.” (Ps., lxxiii., 23.) “If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” (John, xv., 24.)

Now, hatred to God is one of the greatest sins, for it is a voluntary alienation from God, and contrary to faith and charity. Other mortal sins, as the sins of the flesh, for instance, proceed from disorderly passions rather than from the perversity of the intellect and will; but the sin of hatred to God proceeds from an utter perversity of the intellect and will. Hatred to God, therefore, is one of the most heinous sins that man can commit.

There is another sin which is opposed to charity, the sin of schism. The word schism means division, or separation from something. Now, the sin of schism consists in deviating from the doctrine or discipline of the true Church, in separating from her members and from Jesus Christ, who, in the person of the sovereign Pontiff, is her vital principal and head. Hence those who refuse to submit to the spiritual authority of the visible Head of the

Church, and wilfully renounce communication with the faithful, are called schismatists. "Vainly puffed up by the influence of the flesh, they do not adhere to Jesus Christ, the head and body of all the members of the Church, which receiveth increase from God." (Col., ii., 18, 19.)

Schism is a special sin in itself, different from heresy and infidelity. Infidelity proceeds from the intellect, and is opposed to faith and charity, whilst schism proceeds from the will, and is opposed only to charity. Hence, schism is not so great a sin as infidelity; it is even not so great as heresy. Every kind of heresy is schism, but schism is not palpable heresy. Schism is opposed to the discipline and unity of the universal Church, whilst heresy is opposed to the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. "Schism," says St. Cyprian, "is the offspring of pride, and parent of heresy."

ON THE HONOR AND INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS.

26. May we honor the saints of God?

Yes: 1, because we honor God in them; 2, because we may obtain many graces through their prayers.

1. WHY WE HONOR THE SAINTS.

We read in Holy Scripture that, after Joseph, the son of the holy patriarch Jacob, had explained the two dreams of Pharaoh, the king rose and said to his servants: "Can we find such another man filled with the spirit of God?" And as no one replied, Pharaoh turned to Joseph, and said: "Seeing God hath showed thee all thou hast said, can I find one wiser and like to thee? Thou shalt be over my house, and thy word all the people shall obey; only in the throne will I be before thee." And he took his

own ring from his own hand, and gave it into his hand, and he put upon him a robe of fine linen, and a chain of gold round his neck, and caused him to mount up into the second royal chariot, and ordered the crier to go before him, proclaiming to all the people that they should bow their knee, and know that Joseph was made governor over the whole land of Egypt. Moreover he changed his name, and called him, in the Egyptian language, "Saviour of the world." And when the people cried to Pharaoh for food, he said to them: "Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you." (Gen., xli.)

It is thus that the king of Egypt honored Joseph for the great gifts and excellent qualities which he discovered in him; and it was for the same reasons that he also wished all his subjects to bestow upon him all possible honors except the honor due to his royal majesty alone. "Only in the throne will I be before thee." Now, it is for similar reasons that we worship the angels and saints of God. When non-Catholics use the word "worship," they generally mean divine worship; for they do not worship the Blessed Virgin and the saints. Hence they object to Catholics that they pay divine worship to creatures, and thereby become guilty of idolatry. This calumny proceeds from their ignorance of the different meanings of the word "worship," and of the Catholic doctrine.

When the word "worship" is applied to God, it means *supreme* worship, which consists in giving God the honor of divine adoration. This worship is rendered to God alone.

When the word "worship" is applied to the saints of God, it means an *inferior* worship, or homage, which consists in honoring, in a suitable manner, the angels and saints of heaven. Finally, when the word "worship" is

applied to the Blessed Virgin Mary, it means a *superior* homage, rendered to her on account of her supereminent dignity and sanctity as mother of God. There is, therefore, an immense difference between the worship of God and the worship of the saints. We bestow upon the saints all such honors as we possibly can, except the honor of divine adoration, which we give to God alone.

The natural prompting of our heart impels us to respect and honor those who are renowned for their talents, learning, bravery, the dignity of their office, great charity, and other virtues. And we show this esteem outwardly in our words and actions. Good children honor and respect their parents; servants show respect to their masters, and subjects to their superiors. In like manner, the Catholic Church honors those servants of God who are crowned with grace and glory in heaven.

Now, the first faithful servants of God are the holy angels. We honor them—

- 1, For their natural and supernatural gifts;
- 2, For their virtues;
- 3, For the high dignity of their office; and
- 4, For their numberless benefits and services.

1. *We honor the angels for their natural and supernatural gifts.*

“It is more than probable,” says St. Thomas, “that God did not let a long interval of time pass between the creation of spirits, or angels, and the creation of bodies.” “At the beginning of time,” says the council of Lateran, “God simultaneously created two kinds of beings—the one spiritual, the other corporal.”

There is, indeed, no reason to suppose that when God

created heaven, he did not, at the same time create also those who were to inhabit it, and he did not create these inhabitants of heaven as a world apart; he created them to constitute, together with all other created beings, the beauty and perfection of one universal world. God created them as intermediate spiritual powers between himself and mankind. They are pure spirits, that is, intelligent spiritual beings. They have no bodies, nor were they created to be united to bodies, as our souls are. They have no size, no figure, no head, no hands, no feet. They cannot be seen or felt by our senses.

They are simple beings, that is, they are not composed of parts. Hence they are immortal, as every spirit is; for a being that is not composed of parts can never perish except by the omnipotence of God.

The angels are endowed with beauty, power, agility, with subtlety and quickness of penetration, and with a knowledge and science of natural things, which are beyond all human conception.

Beauty is a ray emanating from the Divinity. Hence it is honored by all spirits and loved by all hearts. Now, the angels possess a two-fold beauty—They have a natural and supernatural beauty.

Their natural beauty comes from the very purity of their being which, as it is spiritual, surpasses in dignity and perfection, all other beings; for everything beautiful, contained in inferior beings, is also found in superior beings. Hence an angel of the lowest order is far more beautiful than anything, even the most charming in the whole universe.

The angels do not, like men, derive their existence one from another. They are the first works of God's hands,

the first productions of his omnipotence, the first masterpieces of his wisdom, the first rays of his beauty.

This is but a very imperfect description of the natural gifts of the good spirits. Unspeakably more wonderful is their supernatural beauty, which is derived from their noble spiritual endowments of grace and the riches of immortal glory. St. John the Evangelist, upon seeing an angel in his supernatural beauty, fell prostrate to adore him, thinking that he was the Son of God himself. St. Anselm assures us that, if an angel could make himself visible in all his glory in place of the sun, the light of the sun would altogether disappear in the light and splendor of the angel. St. Bridget said that, at the sight of an angel, we would die of joy. St. Lidwine, who became one of the most extraordinary saints of the Church by her heroic patience in her most excruciating pains which she suffered for thirty-five years, was vouchsafed to see her guardian angel in a bodily shape. She tells us that, at the sight of the angel, every pain of soul and body disappears.

Now the holy angels have all their natural and supernatural gifts from God. By honoring them for these gifts we honor God himself as the Author of them. He who praises a great work of art, praises the artist himself who made it. In like manner, he who honors and praises the angels, honors and praises at the same time God who created the angels.

2. *We honor the holy angels for their virtues.*

God created the angels in a state of natural happiness, and destined them to reach supernatural happiness in heaven by means of his grace and their own merit.

“As the vegetation of plants,” says St. Augustine,

“did not spring forth from the earth at its original formation, but received at first the virtue of germinating, and then acquired the full development and perfection of which they were capable by time and culture, so the angels were created in natural, but not supernatural beatitude. They acquired supernatural beatitude afterwards by their knowledge of the Word, and the contemplation of the Divine Essence.

The angels, however, could not reach their supernatural end without the assistance of divine grace or supernatural means, which can be obtained only by perfect love, merit and the mercy of God.

All that Divine Providence has produced in the course of ages existed, as St. Augustine says, at the beginning of creation, in the so-called seminal, radical, fundamental causes, such as vegetation of every kind—animals, and material bodies. So that all things in creation attain their perfection in virtue of this imperishable seed, which exists in their nature since the beginning of the world.

Now, as the angels were destined for supernatural happiness, it was necessary that the imperishable seed of divine grace should be in them. St. John alludes to this divine seed when he says: “Whoever is born of God, committeth not sin, for his (God’s) seed (divine grace) abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” (Chapt. iii., 9.)

A rational being can obtain an object only by some act which it makes, and that act cannot have the power of putting him in possession of an object which is of a supernatural order. Now, eternal beatitude is a good of a supernatural order, God alone has always enjoyed that perfect glory and happiness. No matter, how great the

natural perfection of the angels was, they could not, by an act of their own natural perfection, put themselves in possession of an object of supernatural perfection. It is only by divine grace that they could merit and obtain it. It is, therefore, evident that the angels were blessed with divine grace before they merited heavenly beatitude.

They merited and obtained that beatitude, not long after their creation, by their first act of perfect love. An angel acts not as man does. The intellectual faculties of an angel are far superior to those of man. He perceives things in a moment. We, on the contrary, are slow in perceiving things. Hence, we take time to reflect and to deliberate before we act. We accomplish things only by degrees. We are wavering and inconstant in our choice. It is not so with an angel. When he makes his choice, he makes it irrevocable for ever by the first act of his will. That first act of the will of the good angels was an act of perfect love of God and of obedience to him. This act was sufficient to merit eternal beatitude, and to fix them in goodness and in love for God for all eternity.

By being submissive to God and adhering to his holy will, the good angels have set a great example of humility and obedience to all men; they have shown us the only true road to eternal happiness, which is no other than the road of perfect submission to the divine teaching interpreted, not by private judgment, but by the Church of Jesus Christ, the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Roman Church.

3. We honor the holy angels for the high dignity of their office.

God created various beings to manifest his perfections. Now, the grander and the more perfect he made certain

creatures, says St. Thomas, the more numerous they are in kind. How prodigiously grand are not the heavenly bodies! Terrestrial bodies are but points scarcely perceptible in comparison with them. Even the whole globe of the earth is but a very small portion of the creation. Almost numberless planets are thousands of times larger than our globe.

As to angels, who hold the first rank amongst all created beings, and are the most perfect, they outnumber all other things in the whole universe. "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him." (Dan., vii., 10.)

"But you are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels." (Heb., xii., 22.) "And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the ancients: and the number of them was thousands of thousands." (Apoc., v., 11.)

Now the angels do not all enjoy the same perfections. Some of them are more privileged than others. The natural spiritual faculties as well as the supernatural gifts of grace of some of them are greater than those of others. God communicates his supernatural gifts and graces to his rational creatures in proportion to their natural perfections. The higher the angels are in natural perfection, the more abundantly they are endowed with the supernatural gifts of grace and glory. Those angels who were endowed by God with a more perfect substance, a more active and penetrating understanding in their natural state, says the Master of Sentences, were also endowed with greater gifts of grace in their supernatural glorification. Grace is the

perfection of nature, and glory the final perfection of grace. The nature of an angel as well as that of man is the foundation of the spiritual edifice ; grace and glory are its supernatural and everlasting ornament.

Though the angels are not in the highest degree of beatitude, yet they cannot rise higher in the glory which they enjoy by the irrevocable decree of divine Predestination. However their joy can be increased by the salvation of those whom they assisted during their pilgrimage on earth ; for we are told in the Gospel : " I say to you, there will be more joy amongst the angels in heaven for one sinner doing penance, than for ninety-nine just who do not need penance." (Luke, xv., 7.) These transports of joy of the angels are but accidental rewards. They are more the result of their beatitude than of their merit ; hence they can increase even to the day of general judgment.

From the difference of the natural and supernatural gifts of the angels arises the difference of the orders of the angels.

There are three hierarchies of angels. Each hierarchy consists of a superior, intermediate and inferior order of angels.

The first hierarchy is composed of the orders of Cherubim, of Seraphim and, of Thrones ; the second, of the orders of Dominations, Virtues and Powers ; and the third, of the orders of Principalities, Archangels and Angels.

In creating heaven and earth, says St. Thomas Aquinas, God established an immutable law, a marvellous order, a universal harmony among all his creatures. This order or law is that the good of inferior beings is to be effected

by means of superior beings, that beings of an inferior order are to be led to God by beings of a higher order, receive from them the knowledge of divine things, and be governed by them.

According to this divine law and order, the Lord of heaven and earth enlightens and governs the angels of a lower order by those of a higher order.

The angels of the first hierarchy who are nearest to God, enjoy the plenitude of beatific vision. They surpass all the other angels in the knowledge of God and divine things, in power and in glory. They enlighten the angels of lower orders; that is, they communicate to them the knowledge of divine things. They are to them what a teacher is to his pupils. These angels had even a foreknowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation, and God will never cease even to the day of general judgment, to reveal to them things concerning the human race, and thus they will always have new things to communicate to the angels of the lowest order of the divine hierarchy; nay, even after the day of general judgment, they will never cease casting light and splendor on those of the lowest order, and on the souls of the elect.

We read in Holy Scripture that a Seraphim purified by fire the lips of the prophet Isaias. However, the Seraphim did not go himself. He commissioned an angel of a lower order to represent him, and so he is said to have fulfilled this office himself, just as we say that the Pope gives absolution when his legate gives it.

The privilege of the angels of the second hierarchy is to participate in the divine government of the universe. In a well organized administration, there are some who receive orders from the king; others, who take necessary

measures for the execution of the king's orders, and others, who determine the manner in which the orders of the king are to be carried out.

In the divine government the angels, called the *Dominations*, receive the orders of the King of heaven and earth; there are others, called the *Virtues*, who take proper measures for the execution of these orders; and there are others again, called the *Powers*, who determine the manner of executing the orders of the Lord of heaven and earth.

To secure the faithful execution of an order, there must be men to direct the execution. Every choir has a director, and every army has higher officers. There must be other men, who, as simple instruments of the will of others, execute the order, and there must be others, who are subaltern officers between the higher officers and soldiers.

In the divine government, the angels of the third hierarchy, called the *Principalities*, direct the execution of the divine orders; the angels of the lowest order are the simple instruments that execute the orders.

Between the Principalities and the angels are the Archangels, as subaltern officers are between the staff and simple soldiers.

It is the opinion of all the Doctors of the Church that the angels exercise a universal power in the government of the moral and physical world. "In this world," says St. Augustine, "nothing can be perfectly accomplished without the intervention of an invisible being." St. Gregory says, "that the angels, called the Powers, have control over the evil spirits, and that those angels, called the Virtues, preside over human affairs." The angels called the

Principalities have charge of provinces and kingdoms; those called the *Virtues*, perform great miracles and extraordinary things in nature; and those called the *Dominations*, are charged with the spiritual government of grace.

It is true, God could take care of and direct and govern all things in person, but he wishes to make use of his angels in order to show us the greatness of his Kingdom, and the majesty and magnificence of the Celestial Court, and that he has established in the world a most wise and admirable government, in which superior beings have the office of directing inferior ones.

4. *We honor the angels for their numberless benefits and services.*

The angels are intermediate powers between God and mankind—they are higher in dignity and power than we are. Hence God makes use of them to procure our temporal and spiritual good. “Are not all the angels ministering spirits,” says St. Paul, “sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation.” (Heb., i, 14.)

It was through his angels that God enlightened the prophets to know and announce future events. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to the prophet Daniel, to tell him the precise time of the coming of the promised Redeemer, the mighty works which the Redeemer would perform, and the terrible punishments which would fall upon the ungrateful city of Jerusalem.

The same angel was afterwards sent to Zachary, to tell him of the birth of St. John the Baptist; and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to announce to her that she was chosen by God to become the Mother of the Redeemer.

It was by an angel that God showed to St. John the future state of the Catholic Church. An angel of the Lord removed the stone from the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, and announced to the holy women that our Saviour was risen.

An angel of the Lord told St. Philip the Apostle to go and teach the Christian religion to the eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. "And the apostle went and instructed him on the way from Jerusalem to Gaza, and baptized him." (Acts, viii.)

The angels present our prayers and good works to God. The angel Raphael said to Tobias that he had treasured up his alms, his abstinences and his prayers, like so much heavenly perfume, and presented them to God: "When thou didst pray with tears. . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Tob., xii., 12.)

"Behold," says St. John, "an angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, *from the hand of the angel.*" (Apoc., viii., 3, 4.)

The angels do not only present our prayers to God, but they also pray themselves for us.

The prophet Zacharias heard an angel pray for Israel in these words: "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, with which thou hast been angry so long." (Zach., i., 12.) And immediately afterwards the Lord comforts the angel by granting his prayer, and promises to bestow again his mercies upon Jerusalem. The angels console the afflicted.

An angel from heaven strengthened our Saviour in his agony. (Luke, xxii., 43.)

We read in Holy Scripture that Abraham dismissed Agar and her son from his house. Agar went into the wilderness of Bersabee. When the water which she took along was spent, she cast the boy under one of the trees and went away some distance; "for," said she, "I will not see the boy die." She cried and wept bitterly. God heard the voice of the boy. And an angel of God said to Agar: "What art thou doing, Agar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the boy. Arise, take up the boy, and hold him by the hand, for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and gave the boy to drink." (Gen., xxi., 14, 19.) An angel of the Lord said to Habacuc: "Carry the dinner which thou hast into Babylon to Daniel, who is in the lions' den." And Habacuc said: "Lord I never saw Babylon, nor do I know the den." And the Angel of the Lord took him by the hair of his head, and set him in Babylon over the den, in the force of his spirit. Daniel arose and ate. And the Angel of the Lord presently set Habacuc again in his own place." (Dan., xiv., 33, 38.) An angel of the Lord descended at a certain time into the pond, called Probation, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatever infirmity he lay under. (John., v., 4.)

When Abraham, at the command of God was on the point to sacrifice his son, an angel of the Lord from heaven called to him saying: "Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou anything to him. Now, I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake." (Gen., xxii., 11, 12.)

The angels perform great miracles for men. An angel of the Lord delivered Lot and his family from the burning of Sodom. "The wicked inhabitants of Sodom, who beset the house of Lot, were struck with blindness by two angels." (Gen., xix., 11.)

At the time of David, the Lord slew, by means of an angel, seventy-two thousand men of the city of Jerusalem. (II. Kings, xxiv., 16.)

The King Ezechias was assured by the prophet Isaias that the king of the Assyrians would not take the city of Jerusalem. "Thus saith the Lord of the king of the Assyrians: He shall not come into the city, nor shoot an arrow into it, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a trench about it. By the way he came he shall return, and into this city he shall not come, saith the Lord. And I will protect this city, and will save it. . . . And it came to pass that night that an angel of the Lord came, and slew in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand." (IV. Kings, xix., 32, 35.)

An angel of the Lord delivered the three children from the flames of the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the lions. (Dan., iii., 49; vi., 22.)

God has appointed the angels as guardians of his Church.

No sooner had Lucifer and his adherents raised the standard of revolt against God, than St. Michael and all the faithful angels entered upon a war against them, executed the sentence which God had passed upon them, and expelled them from their blessed abodes.

Satan is the sworn enemy of God's holy Church. St. Michael is appointed by God to be her special protector against his assaults and stratagems. As such he was the defender of the Jewish synagogue. (Dan., xii.) He was

always so looked upon by the Jews. This holy archangel has ever been honored in the Catholic Church under the same title, as her guardian under God and as the protector of the faithful.

According to tradition, St. Michael appeared to Constantine, and said to him: "It was I who, when you fought against the impiety of tyrants, rendered your arms victorious."

During the time of the persecution of Antichrist, this valiant guardian and protector of the Church will powerfully stand up in her defence: "At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan., xii., 1.) (See Apostles' Creed, p. 166.)

St. Peter was delivered from his chains and prison by an angel of the Lord; (Acts, xii.) and an angel saved St. Paul, and all who were with him, from shipwreck. (Acts, xxvii., 23.) "An angel of the Lord also, by night, opened the door of the prison, and led the Apostles out." (Acts, v.)

Almighty God has also given to every man an angel to guard and protect him. Divine Providence protects and preserves especially what is everlasting. As the soul of man is immortal, God has given it an angel to watch over it. "The Lord has given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps., xc, 11.)

A messenger who is sent on a dangerous journey needs an escort to protect him. We are all on a dangerous journey towards eternity. Hence it is that our Lord gives to every man an angel to stay with him and protect him in all the danger of soul and body, from the moment of his birth until death. "Take heed," says our Lord,

“that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt., xviii., 10.)

He who dies a faithful child of the Church will be carried by his guardian angel to heaven, there to partake of the eternal glory of the angels. “And it came to pass that the beggar (Lazarus) died, and he was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” (Luke, xvi., 22.)

We know from Holy Scripture that angels have appeared in human form. Three angels appeared to Abraham, Lot, and the inhabitants of Sodom. They condensed and transformed the air so as to make it resemble a human body. They took that form, not by their own power and will, but by the power and will of him who sent them, for the instruction of men and to give us an evident foreknowledge of his mercy and glory.

When young Tobias was seeking a guide for his journey, the angel Raphael presented himself in the shape of a man, and declared himself ready to accompany him on his dangerous journey. “He conducted me,” says young Tobias to his parents, “and he brought me safe back. He delivered me from being devoured by the fish; thee, also, he hath made to see the light of heaven; he chased the evil spirit from the wife whom he caused me to have; he gave joy to her parents; and we are filled with all good things through him.” (Tob., xii.)

Overberg was once travelling in a carriage with two nuns. Night overtook them as they were passing through a lonely moor. The night was very dark, they lost their way, and the coachman drove on, he knew not whither. After wandering about for some hours, they at last noticed a light glimmering in the distance. Full of joy they

hastened to the spot of the light, and at last came to a neat farm house. Overberg entered the house and enquired the way to the neighboring town. The master of the house and his wife received Overberg and his companions very kindly, and offered them an agreeable repast. Overberg was so pleased with the kindness of the good people, that he resolved to stay there over night, especially as he feared to go astray again on that inhospitable moor. After speaking together for some time the host and hostess retired to rest; the two nuns also retired to their room, and Overberg remained up alone to recite part of his office. As he was saying his breviary he happened to notice a little picture of the guardian angel, which he had in his breviary. He took the picture in his hand, and began to meditate on the happiness of having a bright angel from heaven to be our continual protector and guide. As he was quite absorbed in the thought of his guardian angel, he heard distinctly a knock at the door. He answered; "Come in!" The door opened and a beautiful youth stood before him. The youth bowed respectfully and said: Good sir, you must leave this house with your companions before one o'clock this night—you must leave quietly without awakening the inmates of the house. To-morrow morning you will find out the reason of this.

As soon as he had said this the youth disappeared. Overberg was filled with astonishment. "What can this mean? Am I awake or am I dreaming? Was this really a vision, or was it but the effect of a heated imagination?" He could not give a decided answer. He looked at his watch. It was just 11:30 P. M. He stood up, he walked through the house, he went into the kitchen. All the inmates of the house were sound asleep. The coachman alone remained,

sitting near the fire, waiting for Overberg and his companions. Overberg spoke first about indifferent matters, in order not to excite the suspicions of the coachman, and finally asked him where the young man had gone who had spoken to him a few minutes ago. The coachman replied, that he had not seen any one enter or leave the house. "Perhaps you were asleep or went out to the stable to see after the horses," said the priest. "Why Father," said the man, "I have been sitting here all the time waiting for you." "Have the nuns gone to sleep?" asked the priest again. "They went nearly an hour ago," answered the coachman. "Where is their room?" asked the priest. "Here," answered the coachman, pointing with his finger to the place where they slept. "And where will you sleep?" asked the priest. "Here in the kitchen," replied the man. "And where have they prepared the bed for me?" asked the priest once more. "It is here, near mine," answered the driver. "Very well!" said Overberg, "Do not wait for me, you may go to bed now. I will go to sleep too as soon as I have finished my office."

The coachman obeyed, and Overberg went back to his room. He sat down full of strange misgivings. Did he really see anything or was it only a vivid dream? He took the picture of the guardian angel again in his hand. He was again absorbed in meditation on the happiness of having an angel guardian. Suddenly a human face appeared a few feet from him. His first feeling was, naturally enough, one of terror but, he soon overcame his fears and gazed friendly at the apparition. On looking attentively at the features of this strange being, he noticed that it bore a close resemblance to the countenance of the angel on the picture. This strange

apparition continued for some time to gaze friendly at him and at last disappeared. Overberg now looked at his watch; it was just 12:15, A. M.

He now resolved to heed the strange warning, and act without delay. He went to the room where the nuns slept, called them and told them to get ready and leave the house as quickly and noiselessly as possible. He then roused the coachman, helped him to harness the horses; then placing some money on the table to reward the people for their hospitality, he hastily left with his companions. They travelled on, recommending themselves to the protection of God, and in about two hours they arrived safely at their destination, the town to which they were travelling.

On arriving at the inn, they ordered some refreshments, but scarcely had they begun to rest from the fatigues of the night, when a young man arrived in post-haste at the hotel. He seemed to be greatly agitated. He wrung his hands, walked to and fro with hurried steps, and seemed to be in the greatest distress. At last Overberg spoke to him, and inquired into the cause of his troubles. "Ah, Father!" said the young man, "I am afraid that some horrible murder was committed last night. Yesterday evening, said he, I left this town to go to a neighboring city on buisness. While passing through the lonesome moor some miles from here, I lost my way. After riding about in the darkness for some hours, I came to a farm house. As I had a large sum of money with me, I did not wish to enter the house, but hoped I would find some path leading from it to the main road. There was a light in one of the rooms. I went to the half-opened shutter and looked in. There, to my horror, I saw four savage-looking ruffians, sitting at a table. One of them took out his watch

and said to his companions: It is now one o'clock. They are surely all sound asleep by this time. Let us go and despatch them without delay. So saying they arose, and went out of the room, while I, full of terror, put spurs to my horse and rode off as fast as he could carry me. Ah, Father! these villains must have committed some terrible murder." On hearing this, the priest took the young man by the hand, and said: "My good friend, do not be troubled. Thank God! Those persons whom you supposed murdered are safe. They are here before you." He then related to the young man the particulars of his miraculous escape, and all returned thanks to God and to the good Guardian angel. Truly, holy writ assures us, "God has commanded his angels to guard us in all our ways." (Ps. 90.)

Finally, on the day of the general judgment of the world, all the angels will come with Jesus Christ in his majesty; they will gather all the nations together before him, and separate the wicked from the just. And after Jesus Christ has pronounced his irrevocable sentence upon the just and the wicked, the angels will accompany the just into life everlasting, while the wicked will be accompanied by Lucifer and all the rebellious angels, and enter with them into everlasting punishment. (Matt., xxv., 31, 32, 46.)

We have seen what the angels are, and for what reasons we honor and love them. Let us now see what the saints are, and for what reasons we should honor and love them.

The Catholic Church is holy in her divine Founder, Jesus Christ. She is holy in her doctrine, which is the doctrine of Christ and his holy Apostles; and his doctrine

is the expression of the will of his heavenly Father: "My doctrine is not mine, but of him that sent me." (John, vii., 16.) As the will of God is most holy, so also the doctrine, expressing the holy will of God, must be holy. Hence, the book containing the word of God is called the *holy Bible*, or *holy Scripture*. Every action and every word of our Saviour breathes holiness, inspires holiness, and leads to holiness. Therefore, he calls those blessed who learn his doctrine: "Blessed are your ears, because they hear. For, amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." (Matt., xiii., 16.) Hence, all those who live up to this doctrine are called saints: "You are a chosen generation—a holy nation," says St. Peter of the Christians. (1 Pet., ii., 9.)

The very enemies of the Catholic Church bear witness to the holiness of her doctrine. Why have so many fallen away from her faith? It is because they had not courage enough to live up to her holy precepts. Why is it that so many do not embrace the Catholic faith who know that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ? It is because they are afraid of her holy morals. Even the most wicked feel naturally convinced that the Catholic religion is holy: a fault in a Catholic is considered, and considered rightly, more grave than in one who is not a Catholic.

The Church is holy in her means of grace. It is her office to make men holy. She holds out to her children not only the holy example and doctrine of her divine Founder as the pathway to holiness; she also offers to them the means of grace, which enable them to live up to her holy doctrine. By his divine example and holy

doctrine, Christ showed us the narrow road that leads to heaven. But what would it avail us to know the road to heaven, if we had no strength to walk on that strait, and, to fallen humanity, hard road? This strength we have not of ourselves. God is the greatest supernatural good. We can, then, acquire this good only by supernatural strength, that is, by the help of Almighty God. By his sufferings and death, Christ obtained for us all the graces necessary to live up to his holy doctrine, to overcome all the evil inclinations of fallen nature, all the temptations, all the trials and struggles of life. These graces he wished to be applied to our souls by means of the sacraments and prayer, and he appointed his Church to sanctify her children by these means of grace.

The child is born in sin; the Church cleanses it in baptism, and makes it a child of God. The child is weak; the Church strengthens it in confirmation, makes it a brave soldier, to battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The child is wounded, falls into sin; the Church, like the good physician, probes the wounds, and pours into the bleeding heart the oil and wine of hope and consolation, in the sacrament of penance. The child is hungry and weary; the Church feeds it with heavenly food, nourishes and refreshes it with the precious body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The heart of the young man feels the fire of that love which first came from God, and which has become unholy only by abuse; and the Church, like a fond mother, sanctifies and preserves this natural love of the bridegroom and the bride. In the holy sacrament of marriage she blesses this love before the altar of God, and declares its bonds perpetual. And should the heart of the young man aspire to a higher and

holier destiny ; should he desire, in his inmost soul, to soar high above the weakening tenderness of mere human love ; should he desire to become the saviour of his fellow-men, the coöperator with God himself in the great work of redemption, the holy Church leads him by the hand, she "blesses, sanctifies, and consecrates" him before the altar of God ; she makes him a priest forever, a priest of the most High God.

At last, when her child is dying, the holy Catholic Church comes to his bedside with sanctifying oil, and the prayer of faith ; she administers to him the sacrament of extreme unction, to strengthen and console him in his fearful death-struggle. But her love does not end at the bed of death. She opens wide the doors of her temple ; she offers an asylum even to the dead body of her child. She blesses that body which was once the temple of the living God ; and she even consecrates the very ground in which that body is laid to rest.

The love of the Church for her children does not pause even at the grave. Day after day she offers up her prayers ; day after day she offers up the holy sacrifice of the altar for the souls of her children departed. The husband may forget the wife of his bosom, the mother may forget the child of her heart, but the holy Church does not forget her children, not even in death : her love is divine, it is eternal. And in this love the Church is impartial : she is just to all. As the holy spouse of Christ, she loves justice, and hates iniquity. She has spurned the anointed king from the temple of God until he repented of his crime ; and on the head of the lowly monk, who spent his days in labor and prayer, she has placed the triple crown.

The Church is holy in many of her members. What

is more natural than this? A mother that teaches her children so holy a doctrine, sets before them constantly the example of her divine Founder, that they may live and die as he did. A mother that has such powerful means to sanctify her children, cannot but be holy in the fruits of sanctity, in the saints, and in the sacred institutions which she has produced.

To be convinced of the personal sanctity of millions of her children, we have but to open the best authenticated *Lives* of the Saints, the Acts of the martyrs, the history of religious Orders, and of charitable Institutions, and the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith. There we read of thousands of men and women who fulfilled the saying of Christ: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel, shall save it." (Mark, viii., 35.)

Oh! how many great tribulations did not the apostles and martyrs suffer for Christ's sake! Thousands of ways were invented by devilish malice to torture them. "Some," says St. Paul, "had trial of mockeries and stripes, of bands and prisons; others were stoned to death; others were cut to pieces; others were put to death by the sword; others wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." (Heb., xi., 36.)

Such was the havoc made during the early persecutions of the Church, that her martyrs alone amount to thirty thousand for every day in the year.

How many thousands of the children of the Church have followed that saying of our Lord: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me!" (Matt., xix., 21.) And, "Everyone that

hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matt., xix., 29.) Astonishing, indeed, is the number of those who have followed this saying of our Lord, by embracing the religious life.

St. Athanasius writes that in his time there were monasteries like tabernacles, full of heavenly choirs of people, who spent their time in singing psalms, in reading and praying; that they occupied a large extent of land, and made, as it were, a town among themselves. Such immense numbers resorted to the religious life in Palestine, that Isidore was the superior of one thousand monks, and his successor, Apollonius, of five thousand in the same monastery. In the cloistered community of Oryrynchus there were ten thousand monks. Upon a hill in Nitria, about twenty miles from Alexandria, there were five hundred monasteries under one superior. Palladius relates that he saw a city in which there were more monasteries than houses of seculars, "so that, every street and corner ringing with the divine praises, the whole city seemed a church." He also testifies to having seen multitudes of monks in Memphis and Babylon, and that not far from Thebes he met with a Father of three thousand monks. St. Pachomius, who lived about three hundred years after Christ, had seven thousand disciples, besides one thousand in his own house; and Serapion had ten thousand monks under his jurisdiction.

Theodoret records that there were also multitudes of religious women throughout the East—in Palestine, Egypt, Asia, Pontus, Cilicia, Syria, and also in Europe: "Since our Saviour," he says, "was born of a Virgin Mother, the fields of holy virgins are everywhere multiplied."

Nor was the great increase of religious houses confined to the early ages of the Church, for Trithemius, who died about the year 1516, says that, in his time, the province of Ments alone contained one hundred and twenty-four abbeys; and that there was a time when they had fifteen thousand abbeys, besides priories and other small monasteries, belonging to his order.

St. Bernard, in his *Life of St. Malachy*, records that, in Ireland, there was a monastery out of which many thousands of monks had come forth: "A holy place indeed," he says, "and fruitful in saints, bringing forth abundant fruit to God, insomuch that one man alone of that holy congregation, whose name was Luanus, is reported to have been the founder of one hundred monasteries. And these swarms of saints have not only spread themselves in Ireland and Scotland, but have also gone into foreign parts; for St. Columba, coming from thence into France, built the monastery of Luxovium, and raised there a great people, their number being so great that the divine praises were sung by them day and night without intermission. St. Columba founded one hundred monasteries, of which thirty-seven were in Ireland, a country, which was, for centuries, known all over Europe as the *Island of Saints and Doctors*." According to Archdall, there were in Ireland seven hundred and forty-two religious houses.

St. Bernard, in the space of thirty years that he was abbot, founded one hundred and sixty monasteries. So rapid was the progress of his order, that, in the space of fifty years from its establishment, it had acquired five hundred abbeys; and at one time no fewer than eight hundred were dependent on Clairvaux.

The Franciscans seem to have been particularly blessed in the speedy and extensive propagation of their order, for, about the year 1600, one branch of this order, called the Observantines, is said to have numbered one hundred thousand members. This order reckons at present two hundred thousand men and three hundred thousand sisters, including the tertiaries. It possesses two hundred and fifty-two provinces, and twenty-six thousand convents, of which five are in Palestine, and over thirty in Turkey. More than eighty-nine emperors, kings and queens have been admitted into the order, which has, moreover, the glory of having furnished three thousand saints, or beatified persons, of whom seventeen hundred are martyrs.

Nor is the Church less holy in many of her members, in our day. Who really takes Christian care of the poor, the sick, and the friendless, but the Catholic Church? She has founded such orders as the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and so many others, in order to administer to their wants.

Where can you find, outside of the Catholic Church, that young and beautiful virgin, who lays at the foot of the cross her youth, her wealth, and her beauty; who sacrifices all earthly hope and love, to spend her days in a loathsome hospital, and to watch, during the long, dull night, by the bedside of the sick and dying? The charitable, heroic deeds of these holy virgins have already brought conviction to the minds and hearts of many non-Catholics.

St. John, the Evangelist, tells us that our Saviour cured one day a young man who had been born blind. The Pharisees heard of this, and were filled with rage and envy. They took the young man aside, and said to him :

"Give glory to God; that man that cured you is a sinner." "Well," said the young man, "whether he be a sinner or not, I cannot say. But one thing I do know, and that is, that he has cured me. God does not hear sinners. If this man were not from God, he could not do such things." (John, ix.) This was the argument of the young man in the Gospel; this, too, is the simple argument of every honest non-Catholic. The bigots and Protestant preachers say to the returned soldier, to the young man who has just come forth from the hospital, where he suffered during a long and painful illness: "The Catholic Church is sinful and corrupt." "Well," the young man answers, "whether she is corrupt or not, I do not know; but one thing I do know, and that is, that I was at the point of death, now I am well; and I owe it, after God, to the good Sisters of the Catholic Church. They waited on me in the hospital, on the battle-field; they nursed me as tenderly as a mother or a sister could have done; and they did it without pay, without any human motive or reward. Now, a bad tree cannot bring forth such good fruit. If the Catholic Church were as sinful and corrupt as you say, God would not give her children such heroic devotedness."

Behold, again, the holy charity of the Catholic Church toward the very outcasts of society,—those poor, fallen creatures, that have become the dishonor of their sex! See how closely she imitates her divine spouse, our Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus is present at a great feast. A poor, sinful woman, notorious on account of her wicked life, falls prostrate at his feet. She washes his feet with her tears, and wipes them with her hair. The Pharisees are shocked and scandalized. They say in their hearts:

“This man is no prophet; if he were a prophet, he would know what kind of a woman that is who kneels at his feet; he would spurn her from him.” But Jesus knows well the sinful life of Magdalen, and yet he does not reject her. On the contrary, he defends her before them all, and says to her: “My child, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!”

Ah, how full of mercy and compassion is the heart of Jesus Christ! Now look upon his spouse, the holy Catholic Church, and see if she is not worthy of her heavenly Bridegroom! The unfortunate woman whom many have helped to drag into destruction, has not now a hand stretched out to save her. The world that allured and ruined her despises her, and laughs her to scorn. The proud, self-righteous Pharisee turns away from her in horror and disgust. The grace of God at last touches her heart. She sees herself abandoned by all, she turns her despairing eyes to God. Friendless, homeless, and alone, she wanders through the dark by-ways of this valley of tears till at last she stands at the ever-open portals of the holy Catholic Church. She enters, she falls at the feet of the priest of Jesus Christ. She weeps, she repents, she is forgiven.

See those pure virgin nuns, who are justly called the Daughters of the Good Shepherd! They have sworn, before the altar of God, to devote their whole life to the reformation of these poor outcasts of society—these unhappy victims of a heartless world. See how gently they receive the fallen one, how kindly they treat her! See how she enters the convent chapel, and at the very feet of Jesus, in the blessed sacrament, she pours out her prayers, and sighs, and tears! She experiences at last

that there is rest for the weary, that there is hope for the sinner ; that there is, indeed, a heaven on earth, in the holy Catholic Church.

In every age, and in every country through which the Catholic religion has spread, there have been many Catholics who showed, in their daily conduct, that they complied with the words of St. Paul: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." (I. Thess., iv., 3.) They were scrupulous keepers of the commandments of God, fulfilling the whole law and the prophets. How could it be otherwise ? Jesus Christ, in the blessed sacrament,—this divine food, the source of all sanctity,—never ceases to bring forth holy bishops, like St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori; holy priests, like St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver; holy virgins like St. Teresa, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Zita, St. Rose of Lima; holy widows, like St. Frances de Chantal; holy martyrs, like Borie, Gagelin, and so many others.

What strict and self-renouncing life did not all holy confessors and virgins lead ! What long and grievous temptations did they not bear ! How often were they not harrassed by the enemy ! What frequent and fervent prayers have they not offered up to God ! What rigorous abstinence have they not practised ! What great zeal and fervor have they not shown for their own spiritual advancement and that of their fellow-men ! How cruel and long was not the war which they waged to subdue their passions ! What purity of intention did they not keep up towards God !

By day they labored, and much of the night they spent in prayer ; though while laboring they were far

from leaving off mental prayer. They renounced riches, dignities, honors, and all that was near and dear to them, to follow Jesus Christ more closely, and resemble him every day more and more.

Outwardly they were poor in earthly things, and suffered great wants; but inwardly they were rich in grace, and abounded in divine consolation. To themselves they seemed as nothing, and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They persevered in true humility; they lived in simple obedience; they walked in charity and patience: and so they daily gained great favor with God to the end of their lives.

As they glorified God by the holiness of life, God also glorified them, even during their life-time on earth; he showed how great and powerful they were with him by granting their prayers, and endowing them with the gifts of miracles and prophecy.

Were I to ask you whether there be any power in the world to which God himself submits, most undoubtedly you would answer: "No, there is not, and to maintain the contrary is to incur the guilt of heresy and blasphemy." Nevertheless, I dare assert, without the slightest fear of committing the sin either of heresy or of blasphemy, that there is a power to which Almighty God himself submits. What, then, is this power? you will eagerly ask. It is the power of the prayers of just. Innumerable passages in Holy Writ, and in the lives of the saints, prove this great truth. I have selected several to prove my assertion. We read in holy Scripture that God one day said to the friends of Job: "Go to my servant Job. . . . and my servant Job shall pray for you, his face I will accept,

that your folly be not imputed to you ;” and they went and requested Job to pray for them. “And the Lord accepted the face of Job.” (Job, xlii., 8, 9.)

We read in Exodus, (xxxii., 20,) that the Jews, notwithstanding the astounding miracles which God had wrought in their behalf, when freeing them from the galling yoke of the Egyptian tyranny, had fallen into the most heinous crime of idolâtry. Exasperated at this most provoking offence, the Lord resolved to blot out this ungrateful people from the face of the earth. He was on the point of pouring out his wrath upon them, when Moses, the holy and faithful servant of God, the leader of the Israelites, interceded for them, and, by dint of earnest entreaty, arrested the arm of God, uplifted to smite this ungrateful people. “Let me alone,” said the Lord to Moses, “that my wrath may be enkindled against them, and that I may destroy them.”

Behold the struggle between an angry God and his suppliant servant ; between justice and prayer. “Let me alone,” says the Lord, “let me destroy this ungrateful people, and I will make thee the leader of a great nation.” Now as St. Jerome (Ezech., xiii.) remarks, “he who says to another : ‘Let me alone,’ evidently shows that he is subject to the power of another.”

But Moses would not yield ; on the contrary, he confidently entreated the Lord to pardon the Jews : “Why, O Lord,” he asked, “is thy indignation aroused against thy people whom thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand ? Let not the Egyptians boast, I beseech thee : He craftily brought them out, that he might kill them in the mountains and efface them from the earth ; let thy anger cease,

and be appeased upon the the waywardness of thy people." Now what was the issue of this struggle between the justice of God and the confident prayer of Moses? God yielded at last, to the power of the prayer of Moses; for "the Lord was appeased," says Holy Scripture, "and did not the evil which he had spoken against his people."

Something similar took place at the time of the prophet Jeremias. Again the Jews had committed atrocious crimes, and the wrath of the Lord was enkindled anew. Again he resolved to reject and destroy them: "And I will cast you away from before my face, as I have cast away all your brethren." (Isaias, vii., 15.) Before inflicting this punishment, the Lord entreated his servant Jeremias not to intercede in behalf of the victims of his just indignation. "Therefore, do not thou pray for this people, nor take unto thee praise and supplication for them, and *do not withstand me*;" (Verse 16,) for if thou dost, the Lord means to say, I shall not be able to pour out my wrath upon this people.

Again, God visited this perverse people with a destructive fire in punishment of their sins. Great, indeed, must have been the anger of God to send this frightful plague; yet still greater was the power of Aaron's prayer, since it prevailed on the Lord to quench the fire instantly. Moses said to Aaron: "Take the censer, and putting fire in it from the altar, put incense upon it, and go quickly to the people to pray for them, for already wrath is gone out from the Lord, and the plague rageth." (Num., xvi., 46.) "And Aaron, the blameless man," says Holy Writ, "made haste to pray for the people, bringing forth the shield of his ministry—prayer—and by incense making supplication, *withstood the wrath and put an end to the calamity, show-*

ing that he was thy servant." (Num., xvi., 48.) Thus Aaron checked this devouring flame, which had already consumed fourteen thousand and seventy men; he checked it not indeed by water, but by placing himself between the living and the dead, offering fervent prayer to the Lord. "And standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plague ceased." (Wis., xviii., 21.)

We read in the book of Ecclesiasticus, (xliv., 17,) that God, on account of the prayer of Noah, put an end to the deluge, and saved in him and his family the whole human race. "Noah was found perfect, just." Hence it was that he could appease the wrath of God: "And in the time of wrath, he was made a reconciliation."

What made Attila, the scourge of God, retreat so suddenly, and give up his plan of invading Italy? It was the prayer of the Pope St. Leo, in deference to which God sent so great a consternation upon Attila, that he felt himself forced to withdraw. What put an effectual check to the ravages of pestilence at the time of St. Gregory? It was the fervent prayer of this saint. Do we not come across similar examples in almost all the lives of the saints? The hands of God are, then, so to speak, bound by the prayer of men of great sanctity; but God feels free to act, if such men cannot be found. He himself has declared by the prophet Ezechiel: (Xxii., 30.) "And I sought among them a man that might set up a hedge and stand in the gap before me in favor of the land, that I might not destroy it; and I found none. And I poured out my indignation upon them; in the fire of my wrath I consumed them."

The terrible fate of Sodom, as related in the Book of

Genesis, is an evident proof of this truth. No sooner had Abraham learned that God intended to destroy this city, with its inhabitants, than he commenced to intercede for it, saying to the Lord: "Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked? If there be fifty just men in the city, shall they perish withal? and wilt thou not spare that place for the sake of the fifty just, if they be therein? Far be it from thee to do this thing, and to slay the just with the wicked, and for the just to be in like case with the wicked, this is not beseeching thee: thou who judgest all the earth, wilt not make this judgment." And the Lord said to him: "If I find in Sodom fifty just within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." And Abraham answered and said: "Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes. What if there be five less than fifty just persons! wilt thou for five and forty destroy the whole city?" And he said: "I will not destroy it if I find five and forty." And again he said to him: "But if forty be found there, what wilt thou do?" He said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of forty." "Lord," saith he, "be not angry, I beseech thee, if I speak: What if thirty shall be found there?" He answered: "I will not do it if I find thirty there." "Seeing," saith he, "I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord: What if twenty be found there?" He said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." "I beseech thee," saith he, "be not angry, Lord, if I speak yet, once more: What if ten should be found there?" And he said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." (Gen., xviii., 23, 32.)

And the Lord departed, fearing as it were, Abraham might ask him to spare the city if but four, or three, or even one just soul could be found there; for there was that

number to be found there, viz. : Lot, his wife and two children. But in order that Lot and his family might not perish with the rest, God, through the ministry of his angels, led them out of the city. But had the Lord found there but ten just men, surely he would have spared the city. Nay, at the time of Jeremias, God declared, through this prophet, that he would be propitious to the city of Jerusalem, if but one man eminently just could be found therein. "Go about through the streets of Jerusalem and see, and consider, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man that executeth judgment and seeketh faith, and I will be merciful unto it." (Jeremias, v., 1.) God seeks men to whom may be applied what is said of St. John the Baptist : "He was great before Lord ;" that is, great with God by holiness of life and by the power of prayer.

Such was St. Athanasius, who for God, and for the sake of religion, opposed the dreadful heresy of Arius, and triumphed over it. Such were St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, who, to the end of their lives, fought the battles of the Lord. In what great esteem must the just be held, though despicable and wretched exteriorly, because, for their sake, God spares whole cities sunk in vice ; they are the stays and pillars of realms. Such was David, of whom God said to Ezechias : "I will protect this city, and will save it for my own sake, and for *David, my servant's sake.*" (IV. Kings, xix., 34.)

Such was St. Paul, to whom, when in danger of shipwreck, the angel of the Lord said : "Fear not, Paul, for thou must be brought before Cæsar : and behold, God hath given thee all that sail with thee." (Acts, xxxii.,

24.) "God," says Cornelius à Lapide, "values one just man more than a thousand sinners, than heaven and earth"; "nay," says St. Alphonsus, "God esteems one eminently just man more than a thousand ordinary just men. As one sun imparts more light and warmth to the whole world than all the stars united, so also a holy man benefits the world more than a thousand ordinary just men." "Who will call into doubt that the world is sustained by the prayers of the saints," says Ruffinus, (*Præfat. in vit. Patr.*)

"Oh!" says St. Gregory, "how I am grieved to the very heart when I see that God banishes holy men and women from one country into another, or summons them to himself. This is to me an evident sign that he intends to punish such a country, and this will be, indeed, very easy for him, when there is no one left to stay his anger." "The prayer of the just man," says St. Augustine, "is a key to heaven; let his prayer ascend to heaven, and God's mercy will descend on earth." (*Serm. 226, de tempore.*)

Now if the prayers of the just, while living in this world, were so powerful with God, what must be the saints' power of intercession with God in heaven, where they share in his divine happiness and in the joy and glory of the holy angels. "The children of God and of the resurrection shall be equal to the angels in heaven." (*Luke, xx, 36.*) The nature of man, it is true, differs from that of an angel; but the glory of heaven does not depend on the human or angelic nature; it depends on the goodness and liberality of God, whose power and goodness are infinite. The joint felicity of the angels and saints consists in their eternal union with God. Hence, arises the glorious equality between the angels and saints. There they reign as kings and

queens of an everlasting kingdom. It is utterly impossible to write down all the divine blessings, both spiritual and temporal, which God has granted to mankind at the intercession of his saints in heaven. When Judas Maccabeus wished to encourage his countrymen to fight valiantly against their enemies, he related to them a vision which Holy Scripture calls "worthy to be believed." He had seen the holy high priest, Onias, stretching out his hands in supplication towards God, and begging grace and mercy for Israel. After this, Onias showed him another man, resplendent with great beauty and majesty, and said, this is a lover of his brethren and of the people of God; this is he that prayeth much for the people and all the holy city, Jeremias, the prophet of the Lord. Thereupon, "Jeremias had stretched forth his right hand, and given Judas a golden sword, saying. Take this sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Irsael." (2 Macc., xv., 12, 16.)

St. John, the Evangelist, tells us in the Apocalypse how he saw the saints in heaven "fall down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints." (Apoc., v., 8.) Thousands of similar divine favors and miracles are recorded in the lives of the saints.

It has been judicially proved that, since the death of St. Francis Xavier, twenty-seven dead persons in the Indies were restored to life by the intercession of this saint. The bishop of Malacca has solemnly declared that at least eight hundred miracles were wrought in his diocese alone by the intercession of St. Francis Xavier.

The Gift of Miracles.

When our dear Saviour commissioned his apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, he added: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark, xvi., 17, 18.) On another occasion our Lord declared in still stronger terms, that miracles would attest the sanctity of those who believe in him. "Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do." (John, xiv., 12.) Hence, the occurrence of miracles in the Catholic Church is so natural that there are regular tribunals before which alleged miracles are examined, and minute rules are laid down for distinguishing true from false miracles. But as miracles do not exist out of the Catholic Church, non-Catholics, for the most part, ridicule the very idea of a miracle happening in our days. It will, therefore, be well, to speak here of the gifts of miracles and prophecy.

Now, what is a miracle? A miracle is an extraordinary work or effect which happens contrary to the common course of nature. Some of such works are greater than others. Hence, they are divided into first-, second-, and third-class miracles. A first-class miracle is such a stupendous work as can be performed by the power of God alone; as, for instance, to stop the sun in its course, or to make a soul come back to its body.

A second-class miracle is a prodigy produced by the agency of a holy angel; as, for instance, when the angel of the Lord prevented the fire from burning the three

children in the fiery furnace; or when an angel restores sight or life which is despaired of. In this case, a natural cause—an angel, operates on a different substance, and produces a thing equal to a miracle. But no such case can give life to a corpse which is already in a state of putrefaction, nor sight to an eye which is entirely destroyed.

A miracle of the third-class is an effect that does not surpass the powers of nature, but is only miraculous in the manner in which it happens; as, for instance, when a person is all on a sudden cured of a fever or dangerous disease, or when an extraordinary occurrence takes place in the weather, as happened through the prayer of Elias.

But here an infidel may object that God cannot act contrary to the general order of nature? We answer, that one cause can have several effects, and these effects can produce secondary causes, subordinate one to the other. We see a proof of this principle in the subordination of a civil government, from the sovereign to the humblest subject of the nation. The lowest in power depends on the chief by intermediate causes.

God is the primary cause, and all secondary causes and their effects depend on that infallible, eternal cause. The order subsisting in this universal cause is immutable and irrevocable. But he can change the order existing in secondary causes; for, as he could establish it in another form, so he can alter it, either by doing things which secondary causes could not possibly produce, or by suspending the exercise of the powers he had given them.

When first he established the natural order of things, he foresaw and reserved the power of doing what he had to accomplish in succession of time. God acts sometimes against the usual order of Nature, says St. Augustine, but

never contrary to the supreme and absolute law of divine justice. The order of justice implies an essential connection with the primary cause, which is the rule and foundation of all justice; and so God never interferes with that inviolable order; but, as we have just said, he can change the order existing in secondary causes, or suspend the exercise of the powers which he gave them. Hence, we see the cause and possibility of miracles. "If then," says the Vatican Council, "anyone shall say that miracles are impossible, and that, therefore, all the accounts regarding them, even those contained in Holy Scripture, are to be dismissed as fabulous or mystical, or that miracles can never be known with certainty, and that the divine origin of Christianity cannot be proved by them, let him be accursed." (iii. Can. 3 and 4.)

As it is not in the power of any creature, man, angel, or demon, to change the established order of nature without God's will and power from him, it is evident that, when a miracle takes place, God acts and manifests his power.

Now, God has reserved to himself this power of performing miracles for the purpose of leading man to the supernatural knowledge of himself by the supernatural effects of miracles. Man, it is true, can acquire the knowledge of God by the effects of divine power, as manifested in the works of creation. They speak to our reason and convince us of the truth that they come from God as their original cause. But this knowledge of God, acquired from the contemplation of the works of creation, is rather deficient. God wished us to know him as perfectly as possible. So he revealed himself to men.

Now God is true. He can neither deceive nor be

deceived, and therefore he can reveal nothing but the truth. But he did not speak to every man. He spoke to men through the patriarchs and prophets, and at last, as St. Paul says, through his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who continues to speak to men through his Church. Now, in order to induce men to believe those who taught them his will, he wrought, through them, miracles in confirmation of the truth of their teaching. "In order that the obedience of our faith," says the Vatican Council (c. iii.) "might be in harmony with reason, God willed that to the interior help of the Holy Ghost there should be joined exterior proofs of his revelation, to wit, divine facts, and especially miracles and prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain proofs of his divine revelation, adopted to the intelligence of all men. Wherefore Moses and the prophets . . . showed forth many and most evident miracles and prophecies."

As a letter, bearing the seal of a king, evidently comes from the king, so a true miracle, performed in confirmation and support of the truth of a doctrine, is a clear proof that such a doctrine comes from God and is infallibly true. Miracles are, as it were, credentials, signed by the hand of God himself; they are the strongest and most striking proofs which God can furnish in order to make people believe those whom he sends to teach them in his name. "If, then," says the Vatican Council, "anyone shall say that divine revelation cannot be made credible by outward signs, and that, therefore, men ought to be moved to faith solely by the internal experience of each, or by private inspiration, let him be accursed." (Vat. Council, iii. can. 3 and 4.)

God cannot permit the performance of a miracle in confirmation and support of error, deception or lying. He may, it is true, grant the gift of miracles and prophecy to impious men. "Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in thy name? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt., vii., 22, 23.) From these words of our lord it is clear that God can make use of the wicked to perform miracles and to foretell future events, as he did by Judas, (Luke, x., 17,) and by Caiphas, (John, xi., 49,) and by Balaam, (Numb., xxiv., 3, for "the performance of a miracle," says St. Jerome, "is not owing to the merit of the performer of the miracle, but to the invocation of Christ, which performs it for the benefit of others." Hence, St. Gregory remarks, (Lib. 20, Moral 8,) "that the evidence of holiness of life is not to be drawn from the performance of miracles, but from true love of God and our neighbor." There is a great difference between divine gifts, gratuitously granted for the benefit of others, such as the gifts of miracles, prophecy, etc., and those which make us holy and pleasing in the sight of God.

God may grant permanently the gift of miracles; and a person who has received this gift may abuse it to acquire vain glory, or temporal gain. In this case God, it is true, coöperates to the miracle, but not to the bad end which the performance of it has in view. This bad end he only permits. A bad priest may say Mass, and use the sacred host for perverse purposes; he may give it to sorceresses to obtain money, to wicked people to ridicule it, etc. It is evident that God did not give the power

of consecration for such a wicked purpose, but may permit the abuse of this power.

I say an impious man who has the gift of miracles, may abuse this gift for a perverse purpose, but God cannot permit him to use it in confirmation of a false doctrine, when such an abuse is hidden from men so that it could not be discovered by them. For, if God permitted the abuse of such power in confirmation of false doctrine, he himself would confirm men in error, and he would have no other means left to correct the error, not even by a miracle, because people could say: If the first miracle was wrought in confirmation of error, why should not the second in the same way. Thus God would deprive himself of all possibility to attest to the truth. Hence, it is that God can never permit the performance of a real miracle in confirmation of false doctrine. No instance can be mentioned to prove the contrary.

There were false prophets and teachers both before and after the coming of the Redeemer. They pretended to be sent by God; and to prove their pretended divine mission, they tried to perform miracles, but never succeeded. In some instances they succeeded, by the help of the devil, whose ministers they were, in performing certain wonderful things, or false miracles.

When Moses performed great miracles before Pharaoh in Egypt, the magicians of the king tried to imitate the miracles of the great servant of God. They cast their rods before the king, and by devilish enchantments, their rods seemed to be changed into serpents, as that of Moses was; they produced, as Moses did, frogs, etc. But their prodigies greatly differ in character from the miracles of Moses. God, indeed, never permits satan to perform

wonderful things for the seduction of the just and the faithful ; and whenever satan is permitted to perform any kind of prodigies, he is obliged to confess his wicked artifice and malice. Hence, when Moses continued to perform miracles, the magicians were constrained to acknowledge that they were unable to do what Moses did. Satan was obliged to declare through his agents : "This is the finger of God."

One day the prophet Elias came to all the people of Israel and said : "How long do you halt between two sides ? If the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word. And Elias said again to the people : I only remain a prophet of the Lord : but the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men. Let two bullocks be given us, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces and lay it upon wood, but put no fire under ; and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. Call ye on the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of my Lord : and the god that shall answer by fire, let him be God. And all the people answering said : A very good proposal. Then Elias said to the prophets of Baal : Choose you one bullock, and dress it first, because you are many : and call on the names of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which he gave them, and dressed it : and they called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And when it was now noon, Elias jested at them, saying : Cry with a louder voice, for he is a god, and perhaps he is talking, or is in an inn, or on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be waked. So they

cried with a loud voice . . . but there was no voice heard, nor did anyone answer, nor regard them as they prayed. Elias said to all the people: Come ye unto me. And the people coming near unto him, he repaired the altar of the Lord, that was broken down. And he built with twelve stones an altar to the name of the Lord, and he made a trench for water of the breadth of two furrows round about the altar. And he laid the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it upon the wood, and he said: Fill four buckets with water, and pour it upon the burnt-offering, and upon the wood. And he said, do the same the second and the third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and the trench was filled with water. And when it was now time to offer the holocaust, Elias the prophet came near, and said: O Lord, God of Abraham, and Isaac and Israel, show this day that thou art the God of Israel, and I thy servant, and that according to thy commandments I have done all these things. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that thy people may learn that thou art the Lord God. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the holocaust, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw this they fell on their faces, and they said: The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God." (III. Kings, xviii.)

It was thus that God, on this occasion, confounded the false prophets before the people and proved to them that Elias was his prophet whom they should believe. As the false prophets of the Old Law were confounded by the true prophets of the Lord, so, also, were the false prophets of the New Law confounded, on many occasions, by the true ministers of Jesus Christ.

Simon, the magician, broached many errors. The principal ones were that the world was created by angels; that when the soul leaves the body it enters into another body; that man had no free will, and consequently, that good works were not necessary for salvation. To induce the people to believe him, he performed lying wonders in their presence. By means of magic spells he one day caused the devil to raise him in the air; but God confounded the devil, and his agent by Saints Peter and Paul, who were present, and invoked the name of Jesus Christ. In that very moment, the devil lost his magic power over Simon, who fell down and broke both his legs. His friends carried him away, but, in his great sufferings and despair, he cast himself out of a high window and perished. Thus died the first heretic that disturbed the Catholic Church, and denied certain truths of her holy teaching.

We read in the life of St. Dominic, that the heretics of his time and the Catholics put together in writing the strongest arguments in defence of their religion; those of the Catholics were the work of St. Dominic. It was proposed that both writings should be committed to the flames, in order that God might declare by his own interposition which religion was the only true one. Accordingly, a great fire was made, and the two writings were cast into it; that of the heretics was immediately consumed to ashes, whilst the other remained unhurt after it had been cast into the fire three times and taken out again.

This public miracle happened at Fanjaux; the fruit of it was the conversion of great numbers of heretics of both sexes. The same kind of miracle happened at Montreal. St. Dominic drew up in writing a short exposition of the

Catholic faith, with proof of each article from the New Testament. This writing he gave to the heretics to examine. Their ministers and chiefs, after much altercation about it, agreed to throw it into the fire, saying that if it burned they would regard the doctrine which it contained as false. Being cast thrice into the flames, it was not damaged by them.

At the time of Martin Luther, a certain man, named William, was drowned. Luther was requested to raise him again to life as a proof of the truth of his doctrine. He commanded him repeatedly to rise from the dead. It was all in vain. (Bredenbach, L. vii., c. 1.) Calvin wished to prove the truth of his doctrine by a miracle. So he begged a man to feign death and have himself carried as a corpse to the church, and then rise at his bidding, so that the people might believe he had been raised again to life by the prayer of Calvin, as a proof of the truth of his doctrine. That man complied with Calvin's request. He was carried to the church, apparently dead. Calvin approached the coffin and said in a loud voice: I command you to rise in the name of Christ, whose Gospel I preach. But alas! the man never arose again. He was dead. God had punished him, and by the sudden death of this deceiver God manifested his detestation of Calvin's heresies, and the truth of the Catholic religion. (Franc-Torrianus, L. i. De Dogmatibus.) Thus Almighty God has never permitted, and will never permit, a real miracle in confirmation of an heretical doctrine; should he bestow the gift of miracles even on an impious man, yet he will never permit him to use this gift in confirmation of a false doctrine. Were God to perform a real miracle in support of an heretical doctrine he would

thereby lead the people into error, and become guilty of the sin of wilful lying and deception. But it would be impious to think that God could do such a thing. He is Eternal Truth itself, and he has reserved to himself the power of performing miracles, in order that he might use it whenever necessary and profitable to prove that the truths revealed by him really come from him.

Hence, our dear Saviour made use of this power to prove to the world that God was in him, not by the grace of adoption, but by that of hypostatic union. He referred the Jews to his miracles as incontestable proofs for his Divinity and divine doctrine. "If you do not believe me" said he to the Jews, "believe my works, that you may know and believe thereby that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (John, x., 38).

His miracles did, indeed, sufficiently prove his Divinity. "The works which I do, give testimony of me, that he (the Father) hath sent me." (John, v., 36.)

Christ performed his miracles, not like the prophets and all others. These performed miracles by the interposition or assistance of another. But Christ performed his miracles by his own power. "And all the multitude sought to touch him, for divine power proceeded from him, and healed all." (Luke, vi., 19.) "Jesus touched the leper and said to him : I will, be thou made clean, and instantly his leprosy was cleansed." (Matt., viii., 3.) "He cast out the evil spirits by his word, and all that were sick he healed." (Matt., viii., 16.) He said that he was God, and that his power was the same as that of the Father. "Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. As the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom he wills." (John. v., 19, 21.)

This particular circumstance that Christ performed his miracles by his own power, without the assistance or interposition of another, distinguishes him from the patriarchs, prophets, and all others.

Now, Jesus Christ performed miracles on spiritual substances, on celestial bodies, on men, and on irrational and inanimate beings. All his miracles were a most evident proof of the truth of his infallible doctrine.

The time came when the power of satan was to be overcome by the doctrine of our divine Saviour. So it was necessary for our Lord to make a beginning of the total ruin of the wicked empire of satan. He made this beginning of the destruction of satan's power over man by delivering from evil spirits those who were possessed by them. "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John, xii., 31.)

Jesus Christ performed miracles on celestial bodies. "And it was almost the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth, for the sun was eclipsed until the ninth hour." (Luke, xxiii., 44.) It is evident that that eclipse took place in an extraordinary manner, in order to cover the earth in mourning for the death of Jesus Christ.

Many things can influence terrestrial bodies, but celestial bodies cannot be influenced in the same way, for God created them, as it were, in a state of immutability. Hence, a phenomenon which takes place in immovable bodies, such as the sun, is more prodigious, and presents to all who witness it, incontestable evidence of the Saviour's Divinity.

As to the manner in which that eclipse appeared at the death of our Saviour, some of the theologians say that the

regular course of the planets which measure time, was not interrupted and that the sun continued to send its rays; but that the Divine Omnipotence prevented them from coming to the earth; others assert that it was an ordinary eclipse, *i. e.*, that the moon, placed between the earth and the sun, intercepted his rays. This is the opinion of St. Dionysius, who was an eye-witness of the eclipse, and St. Thomas Aquinas thinks it to be the most probable.

But how is it that profane writers said nothing on the subject? All calculations of human science being unable to foretell supernatural events, the most learned astronomers did not expect to see an eclipse at that period, and when it occurred, it was useless to calculate its appearance. So they could not explain that phenomenon, and thought it was only some alteration in the atmosphere, and therefore, only a thing of no importance. Origen, however, tells us that a certain historian, Phlegon, mentions it in his chronicles. It was seen by St. Dionysius and his companions, who were at that time in Egypt, a country where the sky is generally clear; and this saint wrote to St. Polycarp: "We saw the moon suddenly placed between the sun and the earth." In another place of his works he says that the eclipse was a miraculous phenomenon which took place in consequence of the position of the sun and the moon at that period. This passage explains the words just mentioned: "We saw the moon *suddenly placed* between the sun and the earth."

Jesus Christ performed miracles also on men. Our Saviour came into this world for the salvation of the human race. "God sent not his Son into the world to judge it, but that the world may be saved by him." (John, iii., 17.)

It was, therefore, necessary for Jesus Christ to show to men, by miracles, that he was their Saviour. So he miraculously delivered many from their corporal and spiritual infirmities. Most undoubtedly, his divine mission appears with as much splendor and evidence when he restores sight to the man born blind ; life to a son to console his afflicted mother ; health to the leper etc, as it appears when he casts out evil spirits, or works prodigies in the heavens. By healing bodies of their incurable diseases, and by bringing man from the darkness of death to a spiritual life, he clearly proved that he was also able to sanctify souls and to bring them from the darkness of sin and death to the light of grace and glory.

Christ also performed miracles on inanimate things. The water changed into wine at the marriage of Cana ; the multiplication of five loaves of bread and two fishes to feed a multitude of people ; the miraculous draught of fishes, the storm appeased, the fig-tree rendered barren, the graves opened and the dead coming to life ; the trembling of the earth, the veil of the temple torn, the rocks split asunder etc., evidently prove that all things in the universe belong to him, and are therefore, submissive to his Omnipotence, and are at the same time sublime and everlasting lessons and evident proofs for all generations to the consummation of the world, that he is their God and Saviour, and Judge, and that his doctrine is infallibly true, and leads to everlasting life all those who live up to it.

As our dear Saviour established his divine mission, by working miracles, so he also wished his Apostles to establish their divine mission by miracles. "Going," said he to them, "preach, saying: The kingdom of

heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." (Matt., x., 7, 8.) Christ knew that the heathen nations, blinded as they were, with superstition and idolatry, sunk in sensuality, governed by their brutal passions, and having no distinct ideas regarding supernatural things, could not, without any other force or power than the preaching of poor fishermen, be induced to forsake their false gods and worship an invisible God, nor renounce their carnal passions, in the hope of a spiritual reward in another world. Therefore, when he imparted to his apostles the great commission to convert the world to his religion, he granted them, at the same time, the power of miracles, thus to show that they were really God's ministers, and that he spoke and wrought through them. Hence, we find that the apostles continued to work miracles after the ascension of their Divine Master. The first preaching of the Gospel in Jerusalem, after the day of Pentecost, was accompanied, and rendered effectual, by the miraculous healing of the lame man, at the gate of the temple, by St. Peter and St. John. St. Peter also cured Eneas of the palsy, and raised Tabitha to life. His very shadow cured the sick (Acts, v., 15); and even the handkerchiefs of St. Paul were the instruments employed by God for signal manifestations of divine power. In a word, the Gospel was introduced and everywhere established by miracles, as St. Mark tells us at the end of his Gospel: "And the Apostles, going forth, preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming their doctrine with miracles that followed."

If we open the books of the Old Testament, we find, in almost every page, accounts of miracles worked by God

in behalf of *his* people. In every great emergency, and whenever it was expedient to warn, to protect, to teach, or to chastise them we find the hand of God stretched out for the performance of miracles ; and since the establishment of the Catholic Church, there is no period, in which our dear Saviour has not attested by miracles to the sanctity of his servants. We have but to open the Lives of the Saints, and we find that, through them, he performed miracles even during their life-time. St. Paphnucius, St. Remigius, St. Otto, Bishop, St. Robert, St. Dominic, and many other saints expelled the evil spirits from those persons who were possessed by them. St. Bernardine, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis Xavier, and many other saints were endowed with the gift of languages. When they preached to an audience composed of people from different countries, every one believed he heard his own tongue spoken.

They spoke in their own mother tongue and were understood by people of different languages. St. Hilary, St. Magnus, St. Patrick, etc., banished snakes and other reptiles. St. Gregory, Thaumaturgus (worker of miracles,) St. Annanias, Bishop, moved mountains. St. Martin, St. Patrick, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Anthony, St. Francis of Paula raised the dead to life. St. Francis Xavier, raised twenty-four, and St. John Capistran, thirty dead persons to life. St. Stanislas, the martyr, restored a man to life who had died three years before, and presented him before the court to testify that he had bought from him a certain piece of ground for his church, and that he had paid him in full.

“My dear Lord,” said St. Colletta, after the death of her prior, “give me back my prior, for I need his aid still in

erecting some more convents ;” and our Lord was pleased to restore this saint—her prior—alive ; and he rendered her valuable services during the fifteen years he lived afterwards.

St. Alphonsus stemmed a lava-torrent of Mount Vesuvius, and turned its destructive course from the city of Naples, by the sign of the cross. St. Raymond Pennafort, standing on his mantle, traversed the sea for a distance of one hundred and sixty miles.

The Gift of Prophecy.

As God endowed the saints with the gift of miracles, so also did he endow many of them with the gift of prophecy. Now what is the meaning of prophecy? The word *prophecy* means the prediction or revelation of such a future event, or of such a supernatural or natural truth as is beyond all human knowledge. Hence, the Jews called the prophets “Seers,” and the Gentiles called them *Vates*, a word which is derived from *vis mentis*, the power of the mind.

It is by means of natural light that we can discern all the objects in nature and the diversity of their colors ; and it is by the light of reason that we are enabled to acquire intellectual knowledge. In like manner, it is by supernatural light, which surpasses the natural powers of human reason, that a person may obtain the knowledge of future events, and supernatural or natural truths, which otherwise could not be known by natural means. Hence, the prophet Micheas says : “I shall arise even while I sit in darkness, the Lord God is my light.” (vii., 7.) The light of prophecy, then, is not a permanent, habitual gift with prophets ; it is a divine inspiration communicated to their intellectual faculty, at certain times, places, and under

certain circumstances. Hence the prophet Isaias says:

“In the morning the Lord wakeneth my ear, that I may hear him as a master.” (L. 4.)

Now, future events may be known in two ways: either in themselves or in their causes. Man can, by his natural knowledge, discover future things in their causes. Thus a skilful physician knows from experience the certain death or recovery of his patient by the symptoms of his sickness. God alone, however, knows all future events in themselves and in the inevitable connexions which exist between the causes and their effects. Hence, the knowledge which is acquired by natural means, greatly differs from that which is obtained by divine revelation: the one is the result of general experience, whilst the other proceeds from divine inspiration; the one is liable to error, whilst the other is infallible. The spirit of prophecy, therefore, consists in the knowledge of future events, or supernatural or natural truths, inspired by divine revelation.

By the manifestation of such events or truths, God instructs holy men, as a master teaches his pupil, that which he knows. The knowledge which an intelligent scholar receives from a good master, does not differ in principle, but is quite the same in the mind of both. In like manner, the spirit of inspired prophecy is the spirit and infallible truth of God, who knows all things as they are.

The true prophets, therefore, announce what they have learned by divine inspiration, according to the words of Isaias: “That which I have heard of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared unto you.” (xxi., 10.)

Now God instructs his prophets in two ways: he some-

times instructs them by express revelation in clear, intelligible words, which then produce a full conviction in the prophet's mind that they come from the infallible Source of all truth and light. "In truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing," says the prophet Jeremias. (xxv., 15.) "Thus saith the Lord: Take order with thy house, for thou (Ezechias) shalt die and not live." (Isaias, xxxviii., 1.)

A similar revelation was made to Abraham, for otherwise he could never have been induced to immolate his only son; but as he was quite certain that it was the will of God, he consented to make the sacrifice.

At other times the prophet experiences a confused sentiment, and is not certain that it is a divine inspiration. In this case, he cannot sufficiently distinguish his own private knowledge from the voice of God. Does it then follow that his prediction is false? No; for God never leads his holy prophets into error of any kind, as this would be contrary to his divine Majesty, and to the enlightenment of others. He inspires him with sentiments of truth, and directs his prophetic spirit by new light and grace.

Now, the mind must be prepared to receive such supernatural light and grace; it must be given to the contemplation of spiritual things. "The sons of the prophets dwelt in solitude and deserts with Eliseus." (IV. Kings, iv., 38,) so that, their spirit being free from all temporal cares, they might be more docile to prophetic inspirations and more attentive to divine revelations. "Wisdom conveyeth herself into holy souls, she maketh the friends of God, and prophets." (Wisd. vii., 27.) We must then say with St. Peter: "Prophecy came not by

the will of man at any time ; but the *holy men* of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost." (II. Pet. i., 21.)* Prophecies, therefore, are no less than miracles, divine attestations not only of the sanctity of individual members of the Catholic Church, but also of the holiness of their faith and practices of religion. Hence, our dear Saviour proved his Divinity and divine doctrine not only by miracles, but also by the prophecies concerning him, and by his own prophecies. There is one of his prophecies by which he has especially shown to the whole world that he is the Lord of heaven and earth, and the Redeemer, and Teacher of mankind. It is related in the Gospel of St. Luke, (Chapter xix., 41, 42, 43,) "When Jesus drew near (Jerusalem), seeing that city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and

* REMARKS.—1. No previous disposition is absolutely necessary to receive that supernatural light of prophecy, for the spirit of prophecy depends on the will and operation of the Holy Ghost. "But all these things one and the same spirit worketh, giving to everyone according to his will." (I. Cor. xii, 11.) God acts in spiritual things as he does in material things. In the latter, he can create both substance and form, and give them such natural disposition as he thinks proper. He could also, if he wished, create a soul endowed with a prophetic spirit. It is not even necessary for the accomplishment of prophecy to employ certain images in order to express it, for divine operation does not change man's natural disposition on that account, but only removes from his mind whatever might be contrary to the spirit of prophecy. Hence, it is that every prophet has a peculiar style of his own, notwithstanding divine inspiration.

2. A man may be a prophet without leading a holy life "Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied and done many miracles in thy name? And I will then tell them, I never knew you; depart from me you that work iniquity." (Matt. viii, 22.) But St. Paul says: "The Lord knows who are his." (II. Tim., ii., 19.) Prophecy,

thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straighten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." This prophecy was literally fulfilled A. D. 70, when the city with its magnificent temple was destroyed by the Roman soldiers, after eleven hundred thousand Jews had lost their lives and ninety-seven thousand were sold as slaves. Such was the end of the Hebrew nation. The temple, the sacrifices, the legal priesthood, the distinction of tribes—all disappeared before the sword of Titus, who proclaimed himself the instrument of divine vengeance,

therefore, may be found in those who are not his by grace. Balaam was not a holy man and, yet he prophesied (Num., 22.) ; neither was Caiphas, but being high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation. (John xi, 51.)

The principal source of a holy life is sanctifying grace, which submits man's will to God ; but prophecy being the manifestation of divine light, can enlighten his intellect without the coöperation of the will. But as a general rule, sanctity is absolutely and morally necessary for a true prophet.

Again, it is well to know that the devil can never be the author of real prophecy.

All angels, both the good and the bad, being of a spiritual substance, are endowed with greater intelligence and perspicacity than we are. Hence, they can discover future events in their causes much better than we can. So by their natural power and knowledge they can manifest their will and desigus to men, not by illuminating the human mind, but in representing imaginary visions to us, and fascinating the sensitive powers. But as those wicked spirits cannot depart from the natural order of their existence, all their revelations are false, and therefore they cannot possibly be the author of real prophecy. Hence, it is that in the Scripture, they are called false prophets, or the prophets of idols. On this account St. Augustine says, that when the devil takes possession of the spirit of some men by delusive revelations, he makes demoniacs or false prophets of them.

August, 20, A. D. 70. The prophet Daniel also had foretold this demolition of the temple, and that its desolation would last to the end of the world. (Chap. ix, 24, 27.) It has already lasted for nearly two thousand years. Efforts were made at different times, especially under the emperor Julian, the Apostate, to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, but in vain. This emperor was one of the most crafty and most dangerous instruments that the devil ever employed for the destruction of the Catholic religion. He was aware that several of his predecessors had used the utmost cruelty to extirpate the Christian name, but failed in their efforts; he knew that the Catholic faith increased under axes, and that the blood of the martyrs was a fruitful seed which multiplied the Church over all

3. It may happen, that the devil sometimes predicts certain truths.

Truth is to knowledge what goodness is to things; but there is nothing, however bad it may be, that has not some mixture of good; it has at least the good of existence, which is better than nonentity. Hence, let a knowledge be ever so false, it has something true. It is the appearance of this truth that seduces or actuates our intellect. The human intellect can receive but what is true or that which has the probability of truth, the same as the will chooses only what is good, or that which has the appearance of good. On this account the demon of malice and iniquity inspires his prophets with certain plausible truths in order to propagate false revelations. God sometimes permits those false predictions for the good of religion; for the weak and incredulous portion of mankind is often led to believe a testimony which is less suspicious. The sibyls even made predictions concerning the Messiah, which were confirmed by the event. Balaam, a soothsayer, had sometimes knowledge of future things by the ministry of demons and magic art, and announced true revelations; "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel." (Num., xxiv., 17.) So the demon, notwithstanding his malice, sometimes inspires his prophets with true revelations concerning the glory of God and the Church of Jesus Christ. When false prophets are instructed by those wicked spirits, says St. Augustine, they predict some truths, sometimes by the power of their own nature, of which the Holy Ghost is the author, and sometimes by the revelation of holy angels.

nations; he was convinced that brute force was not able to destroy the religion of Christ. He, therefore, adopted quite a different plan in persecuting the Catholic Church. He tried to bring discredit upon the Christian religion by bringing the scandal of imposture upon its divine Founder, our Lord Jesus Christ. To succeed in this he conceived the plan of rebuilding the Jewish temple. He understood that if he could succeed in carrying out this plan, he would also easily succeed in his design of bringing the scandal of imposture upon Christ. To understand this wicked design, we must remember that our dear Saviour and the prophet Daniel had foretold in express terms not only the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem which was brought about by the Romans under Titus, but they had also foretold its final ruin and desolation.

The Jewish religion was but a temporary dispensation intended by its divine author, God himself, to prefigure a more complete and perfect religion, and prepare men to embrace it; it not only essentially required bloody sacrifices, but it is also commanded that these sacrifices should be offered in a certain place appointed by the law; and that place was the temple of Jerusalem. Hence, the final destruction of this temple was the abolition of the sacrifices; it annihilated the whole system of this religious institution. For this reason St. John Chrysostom says "that the destruction of Jerusalem is to be ascribed, not to the power of the Romans, for God often delivered the city from no less dangers, but to a special disposition of divine Providence which was pleased to put it out of human perversity to delay or respite the extinction of those ceremonial observances. As a physician, by breaking the cup, prevents his patient from indulging his ap-

petite in a noxious draught, so God withheld the Jews from their sacrifices by destroying the whole city itself, and making the place inaccessible to all of them."

Now, the emperor Julian's plan was to falsify the Scripture prophecies—those of Daniel and our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, he wrote a letter to the Jews, in which he declares them free from all exactions and taxes, and orders Julius (probably Hillel), their most reverend patriarch, to abolish the gatherers of the said taxes, begs their prayers (such was his hypocrisy), and promises, after his Persian expedition, when their temple should be rebuilt, to make Jerusalem his residence, and offer up his joint prayers together with them.

After this, he assembled the chiefs among the Jews, and asked them why they offered no bloody sacrifices, since they were prescribed by their law. They replied that they could not offer any except in the temple, which then lay in ruins. Thereupon he commanded them to repair to Jerusalem, rebuild their temple, and re-establish their ancient worship, promising them his assistance in carrying on the work. The Jews received the warrant with inexpressible joy; they were so elated with it, that, flocking from all parts to Jerusalem, they began to scorn and triumph insolently over the Christians, threatening to make them feel the fatal effects of their severity, as they themselves had heretofore felt those of the Roman powers. The news was no sooner spread abroad than contributions came in from all hands. The Jewish women stript themselves of their most costly ornaments to contribute towards the expense of the rebuilding of the temple. As the emperor himself was impatient to see it finished, he encouraged them by telling them that, according to their

mysterious sacred books, this was the time in which they were to return to their country, and see their temple and legal observances restored. He ordered his treasurers to furnish money and everything necessary for the building. He drew together the most able workmen from all quarters, and appointed persons of the highest rank as overseers, placing at their head Alypius, his intimate friend, who was formerly Pro-prefect of Britain. He charged him to make them labor in this great work without ceasing, and to spare no expense.

All things were in readiness; workmen had come together from all quarters; stone, brick, timber and other materials in immense quantities, were laid in. The Jews of both sexes and of all degrees bore a share in the labor; even women helped digging the ground and carried out rubbish in their aprons and skirts of their gowns. Even some of the pickaxes, spades, and baskets were made of silver for the honor of the work.

The good bishop, St. Cyril, beheld all these mighty preparations without any concern. Relying on the infallible truth of the prophecies: "That the desolation of the Jewish temple should last till the end (Dan., ix., 27,) and that one stone should not be left on another. (Matt., xxiv., 2.) He foretold, with the greatest confidence, that the Jews, far from being able to rebuild their ruined temple, would be even the very instruments whereby that prophecy of Christ would be still more fully accomplished than it had hitherto been, and that they would not be able to put one stone upon another; and the event proved the truth of the prediction.

Till then the foundations and some ruins of the walls of the temple had remained, and the inhabitants still carried away the stones for their private buildings.

These ruins were first removed by the hands of the Jews, who thus were the instruments for the full accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction. Then they began to dig the foundation. In this work many hands were employed. But what was thrown up in the day, was cast back again into the trench during night by repeated earthquakes. And when Alypius the next day pressed the work on more vigorously, with the assistance of the governor of the province, there issued such horrible balls of fire out of the earth, near the foundations, as rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched workmen. As the victorious element continued in this manner, and was, as it were, most firmly determined to drive all hands to a distance, Alypius thought proper to abandon the work. Besides the earthquake and eruption of fire, there were also storms and tempests, whirlwinds and lightning, crosses impressed on the bodies of the assistants, and a flaming cross in the heavens, surrounded with a luminous circle.

The order of these extraordinary things is as follows :

This judgment of God commenced by storms and whirlwinds, which carried away prodigious heaps of lime and sand, and other loose materials. After these followed lightning, which destroyed the more solid materials, and made the iron instruments melt. Then there came the impressing shining crosses on the bodies and garments of the assistants, without distinction. In these crosses there was something that, in art and elegance, surpassed all painting or embroidery. When the infidels perceived those crosses, they tried to wash them out, but could not succeed.

Then came the earthquake, which cast out the stones

of the old foundations, and shook the earth into the trench dug out for the new foundation; it also overthrew the adjoining buildings and porticos in which a large number of workmen were lodged. These were all either crushed to death, or at least maimed or wounded. The number of killed and wounded was increased by the eruption of fire, attended with storms and tempests above, and with an earthquake below. Many tried to escape the fiery eruption by flying into a neighboring church for shelter, but they could not enter it, the doors being closed by a secret invisible hand. This eruption of fire was frequently renewed till it overcame the rashness of the most obstinate, for it was repeated as often as the projectors renewed their attempt till it tired them out.

Lastly, on the same evening, there appeared over Jerusalem, a luminous cross, shining very bright, as large as that in the reign of Constantine, encompassed with a circle of light.

What is remarkable in these events is, that the eruption of fire was, contrary to its usual nature, confined to one small spot; it obstinately broke out by fits, and ceased with the project, and this in such a manner that it is attributed to an intelligent cause.

The cross in the air and the crosses on the garments were admirably fitted, as moral emblems, to proclaim the triumph of Christ over Julian, who had taken the cross out of the military ensigns which Constantine had put there to be a lasting memorial of that cross which he saw in the air, and which presaged his victory. The same was again erected in the heavens to confound the vanity of its impotent persecutor. The earthquake was undoubtedly miraculous, and though its effects were mostly such

as might naturally follow, yet they were directed by a special supernatural Providence, as the burning of Sodom by fire from heaven. This great event happened in the beginning of the year 363. It is related not only by Christian, but also by profane writers, and the Jewish Rabbins. St. John Chrysostom admires, in this event, the wonderful conduct of Divine Providence. He observes that, if the Jews had not set about to rebuild their temple, they might have pretended that they could have done it. God, therefore, permitted them three times to attempt it : once under Adrian, when they brought a greater desolation upon themselves ; a second time under Constantine, who dispersed them ; the third time " in our own time," as he says, " not above twenty years ago, when God himself visibly baffled their endeavors in order to show that no human power is able to reverse his decree ; and this at a time when our religion was oppressed, lay under the axes, and had not the liberty even to speak, that impudence itself might not have the least shadow of pretence." (A. Butler's Lives of the Saints, March 18.)

As God in the Old Law, which was figurative of the Christian Dispensation, sent prophets from time to time to rouse the faith and piety of the Jewish people, so, also, he mercifully vouchsafed to illustrate the church, from age to age, especially in times of trial and difficulty, by such clear manifestations of the Divine power as to make it evident that the finger of God was there ; he raised up saints in his church and endowed them with most extraordinary gifts of grace, to be powerful mediators between him and mankind.

There is, indeed, but one mediator of justice, Jesus Christ, our Lord. He alone redeemed us. He alone

satisfied for our sins. All graces come from him alone as their true source. But the saints are mediators between Jesus Christ and us by their intercession. It is through them as through channels that God makes his grace flow upon us.

The same reasons, then, which induce us to honor the angels, induce us also to honor the saints of God. Christ wishes all men to honor his priests for the great divine powers which he has given them, and he declares that the honor bestowed upon his priests is bestowed upon himself. "He that receiveth you," says Christ of his priests, "receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." (Matt., x., 41.) If God then wishes all men to honor his servants on earth, he certainly wishes us also to honor those of his servants who are most intimately united with him in heaven; and if God considers the honor bestowed upon his servants on earth as bestowed upon himself, he undoubtedly, considers also the honor which we bestowed upon his servants in heaven as bestowed upon himself. Parents consider the respect shown to their children as shown to themselves. The saints in heaven are the most beloved children of God.—To honor and respect them is to honor and respect God himself, through whom they are what they are; it is to honor God the Father, who created them; it is to honor God the Son, who redeemed them, and it is to honor God the Holy Ghost, who sanctified them and strengthened them to remain faithful to God until death. Hence it is, that the honor paid to the saints, instead of diminishing God's honor, rather increases it in a great measure.

To honor the saints, then, for the reasons and in the manner we do, is not to commit the sin of idolatry, as

Protestants in their vincible or invincible ignorance assert. It is the sin of idolatry to give to any creature the honor of divine adoration. Now, no Catholic would ever dream of doing this. We honor the saints as the particular friends of God; we honor them as our intercessors with God; we honor them as our benefactors; we honor them for their ardent love for God and their neighbor; we honor them for the interest they take in our spiritual and temporal welfare; we honor them for the heroic, virtuous example which they have given us; we honor them because we hope to be one day sharers of their supernatural happiness for all eternity; we honor them because God himself commands us in Holy Writ to honor them. "Behold," said he to Moses, "I will send my angel who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. *Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned, for my name is in him.*" (Exod., xxiii., 21.) "Let us now praise," says the Wise Man, "these glorious men—men rich in virtue, men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed—Let the Church declare their praise." (Ecclus., xliv., 1, 6, 10, 15.)

II. *Why we invoke the saints.*

We invoke the saints, because we may obtain many graces through their prayer.

God, the eternal Sower, whose invisible hand fills the boundless space with suns and planets, who has produced out of nothing, the earth on which we live, the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms—God, the creator of all the millions of human beings that have peopled the earth, and will dwell thereon till the day of doom, the creator of the countless millions of angels who people

heaven—this great God, whose power and wealth are unlimited, does not intend that a single atom should be lost in the immense regions of the universe. This is why he leaves nothing barren that is capable of production ; this is why, over the entire extent of our globe, innumerable germs float in the air, and cover the earth wherever it is capable of vegetation, wherever there is room for a blade of grass or for the tiniest moss.

In like manner, the *graces of God*, like invisible but fruitful germs, float continually around our souls, seeking for some fertile spot. Now, God sows, as it were, by different hands, his graces and blessings upon all men. He has especially consecrated and appointed the priests of the Catholic Church to sanctify the people. It is by the priests that God the Father saves the world ; by them God the Son applies the merits of his sufferings to the souls of men ; it is by the priests that the Holy Ghost sanctifies souls when they receive baptism, or any other of the seven sacraments ; by them he preaches to the people and shows to them the true road to heaven. “ You are the light of the world,” says our Lord of his priests.

But God, as we have seen, is also accustomed to bestow many of his graces and blessings upon mankind by the hands of his holy angels and saints. Hence it is that we invoke them to ask of God, through Christ’s merits, those graces which are necessary for salvation.

But certain people, being ignorant of the ways of God, say : “ Is not God infinitely superior to all the angels and saints in heaven ? If they are merciful and powerful, is not God incomparably more so ? Is it not much better to address our prayers to God alone, than to have recourse to the intercession or mediation of others ? ” Such is some-

times the language of ignorant, inconsiderate people who never reflect on the order established by God, nor on the means which he has given us to acquire temporal and eternal happiness.

In creating heaven and earth, says St. Thomas, God established a marvellous order, a universal harmony among all his creatures. This order, as we said above, is that the good of inferior beings is to be procured only by the generous interposition of superior beings,—that beings of a lower class are to be led to God by those of a higher class. By this order of his Divine Providence, God enlightens and instructs the angels of a lower rank by those of a higher rank. In like manner, he procures the spiritual and temporal good of men by the mediation of his angels and saints.

Now, it is not for want of power that God uses secondary causes for our spiritual and temporal good; it is rather to manifest both his infinite wisdom and goodness in the general government of his Divine Providence, and the merit and sanctity of some of his creatures whom he mercifully deigns to associate with him in the government of his Providence. It is our duty to conform, in all things, to this infallible order, and have, on this account, recourse to the intercession of the saints. Such is his holy law and will, says St. Thomas Aquinas.

We poor pilgrims, therefore, are under a certain obligation to invoke the saints, in order to obtain, through their intercession, the divine grace necessary for our salvation, not because God cannot save us without the intercession of the saints, but because the order established by God requires that, while we remain in this world, we be brought to God by the prayers of the saints. (St. Thom. in 4. Sent. dist. 45, qu. 3, a. 2.)

It is on this account that St. Augustine says: "There are many things that God does not grant without a mediator and an intercessor." (Quest. 149, super. Exod. serm. 2 et 4 de St. Steph.) The justness of this remark is confirmed by two examples—Abimelech and the friends of Job were pardoned, but it was only through the prayers of Abraham and Job. (Gen., xx.)

Our belief, then, concerning the honor and invocation of the angels and saints is, that all the efficacy of their prayers depends principally on the goodness and mercy of God, and on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ who, as we have said above, is our only Mediator of Justice and merciful advocate at the right hand of his eternal Father; but we believe also that it is good and profitable to desire the intercession of the saints, to invoke them in fervent prayer, in order to obtain from God, through their intercession, spiritual and temporal blessings which Jesus Christ has merited for us by his death upon the cross. (Council of Trent, Sess. xxv.) Hence, our manner of praying to God is different from that of praying to the saints. We beg of God, to have mercy on us and to hear us; but we desire the saints only to pray for us, or to assist us by their prayers; and thus are understood all our prayers, under what form of words soever they are made.

Would to God that we honored and invoked the angels and saints oftener than we do; we would, no doubt, feel better for it; they then would obtain for us greater and more numerous spiritual and temporal blessings which would make our faith more lively, our hope more confident, our charity for God and our fellow-men more ardent, and our hearts more detached from this world, and

more desirous of everlasting goods. Were we to honor and invoke the holy angels and the saints more frequently than we do, they would prevent the evil spirits and wicked men to lay snares for our eternal ruin; they would prevent many blasphemous tongues and false teachers from cursing and ridiculing our holy religion, and even force them to acknowledge its sanctity and saving power, and bless those that live up to it.

When Balaam, a soothsayer of the children of Ammon, was sent by Balac, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites, he saddled his ass, and went with the princes of the king to curse the people of God. But an angel of God stood in his way with a drawn sword, and his ass turned aside. Balaam smote her; but the angel moved the tongue of the brute beast and rebuked Balaam for his folly. Balaam now saw the angel. He was struck with fear, and begged leave to return. But the angel said to him: "Go now with these men, and speak no other things than I shall command thee." The king commanded Balaam three times, but in vain, to curse the Israelites. Balaam was forced, by an irresistible power, to bless the people of God. "I came here," he said, "to curse, but I am forced to bless."

The mother superior of a certain convent of the Sisters of the Visitation wrote one day to St. Frances de Chantal that she had a novice who felt so greatly drawn to the simple contemplation of God alone that she was not able even to invoke the saints at her morning prayers. St. Frances de Chantal replied, "that the devil had a hand in that; that the novice should be thoroughly examined and taught that, how favorable soever the king may be to us, there are always times and circumstances, in which

we are obliged to apply to his ministers. Order, therefore, this novice sometimes to recite the Litanies of the Saints. If she does not do it, look upon her as a suspected person. Put her under the direction of some learned priest and let her be thoroughly tried." This advice was followed, and it was soon discovered that, as this novice had not long been converted from Protestantism, the devil gave her that absorption in false contemplation, in order to keep her in the heretical error that it was wrong to invoke the saints.

St. Frances de Chantal said to her sisters on this occasion: "I assure you, I dared not say to you anything more than advice you to have that novice thoroughly examined in our religion: But I felt in my heart that her soul had not been thoroughly cleansed from the leaven of heresy." To cure her of this wound, the saint advised the mother superior of the convent to make that novice recite the Litanies of the Saints every day during the time of her noviciate. By this means she was entirely cleansed from the leaven of heresy and became a very devout religious.

ON THE HONOR AND INVOCATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

27. Which of the saints should we honor most ?

The Blessed Virgin Mary, because she is the Mother of God, and the queen of all saints.

One day the great king Assuerus asked one of his ministers, "How should he be honored whom the king desires to honor?" "He whom the king desires to honor," replied the minister, "should be clad in kingly robes; he

should be crowned with a kingly diadem and the first of the royal princes should go before him and cry aloud: 'Thus shall he be honored whom the king desires to honor.'" In this manner did an earthly king honor Mardochai, who had saved the monarch's life. And how should the King of heaven and earth honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he had chosen, from all eternity, to cooperate with him in the redemption and sanctification of mankind?

We have already seen how God delights in honoring his saints on earth and in heaven. But there is one whom he has honored more than all the angels and saints together. This privileged creature is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was chosen by God, from all eternity, to cooperate with him in saving and sanctifying mankind.

There was once a celebrated architect, who built a most magnificent palace. When the costly edifice was completed, he gave it to good people for their dwelling. But they soon behaved badly, and were a scandal to all their neighbors, who often said to one another: Why was so splendid a palace built for such wicked people? At last the king and queen arrived and took possession of the palace. They forgave the servants for their bad behavior, and tried to make them good again. Then the people said:—Now we understand why this magnificent building was erected; it was for the king and queen.

The architect in this parable is God the Father; he built a magnificent palace—the world. He put in it Adam and Eve. They soon behaved badly, and now it was said by the angels: Why was so splendid a palace,—the world—created for these wicked people? At last the King and the Queen arrived, that is, Jesus Christ

and the Blessed Virgin, his Mother. They pardoned the servants and tried to make them good again, and the angels exclaimed: Now we understand why this great and splendid palace—the world—was made: it was for Jesus Christ and his Mother—the King and Queen of the world.

God decreed from all eternity to create the world as a dwelling place for men, where they, by a holy life, should gain an eternal reward. He foresaw from all eternity that men would not live up to the end of their creation. God then would have been frustrated in his design in creating the world and men, had he not decreed from all eternity, the Incarnation, and consequently the creation of his Mother, for the redemption of men. It was then, principally for the sake of the Redeemer and his Mother that the world was created; for they were to come into this world for the justification and glorification of men, which was to be operated through Jesus Christ and his Mother: "*Ordo enim naturæ creatus est et institutus propter ordinem gratiæ,*" says St. Thomas Aquinas.

The principal end of the creation of the universe, I say, is Christ and his Mother, and the elect, that they, the elect, receive the grace of God here below through Christ and his Mother. Although it be true, that Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin are, so to speak, certain parts of this world, which is prior to them in material existence, yet if considered in their final end, they are prior to the world. For this reason St. Paul calls Jesus Christ the beginning, *the first born from the dead*, that in all things, he may hold the primacy: "because in him, it hath well pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto him-

self, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." (Coloss., i., 18, 20.) In like manner the Holy Church applies to the Blessed Virgin the words of Ecclesiasticus: "*Ego ex ore Altissimi prodivi, primogenita ante omnem creaturam—Ego feci in cælis, ut oriretur lumen indeficiens.*" (C. 24, 5-6.) "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first born of all creatures. I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth." She gave to the world that never-failing light, i. e. Christ the Sun of Justice, and through him, the light of faith. *Et qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo.*—(Verse 12.) "And he that made me, rested in my tabernacle."

The Rabbi of old, too, used to call the mother of the Messiah "*primum hominem,*" the first man, so that all the rest of men could be called her children.

I say first man; first, of course, not by creation and time, but by dignity, by predestination, and by the decrees of God, and on account of her destiny. Hence, St. Bernard (serm. I. in *Salve Regina*) says: "For her sake, every Scripture was made; for her sake, the whole world was created; and she is the one that is full of grace; and through her man was redeemed. *Verbum caro factum, Deus humilis, et homo sublimis;*" God created her, as a world apart, for himself.

In the revelations of St. Bridget, (in serm. angel. C. 5,) we read as follows: "When the visible world was created there was still existing in the mind of God, another less world with all its beauty and splendor, which was still to be created, and this world was the Blessed Virgin; from this world was to come greater glory for God, greater joy for the angels, and greater blessings for all those men

who wished to apply to, and enjoy her goodness, than there should come from the vast world you live in." And indeed, it is with truth, that the Blessed Virgin, in this revelation, is called "a less world," because she carried in her sacred womb, God himself, in whom all things are contained, and because, according to St. Bonaventure (in Spec. B. Virg. C. 6.) "whatever, after God, is most beautiful, most sweet and most attractive in glory, is found in Mary, and through Mary." Truly, he who is mighty, has done great things in her and for her. "*Fecit mihi magna qui potens est. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo.*"

There is, then, a certain mutual dependence between the creation of the world and the nativity of Christ and the Blessed Virgin.—For God did not wish that Christ and the Blessed Virgin should be born except in this world, and again, he did not wish that this world should exist without Jesus Christ and his Mother; nay, it was for them that he created it. They being, then, the final reason for the creation of the universe, God also wished that all men should be dependent on them, as he had decreed to institute, through them, the order of grace, of the *justification and glorification of the elect*.

The Blessed Virgin, then, is the tabernacle in which God concealed the created wisdom, nay, the uncreated and incarnate wisdom Itself. It was in her that the Son of God was conceived and made man and dwelt for nine months; so that, if we call him our Redeemer from all eternity, we may also, with great propriety, call his Blessed Mother our Redemptrix, that is, an instrument or *perpetual help* in the work of our redemption, and in the whole order of grace wrought and instituted by Jesus Christ.

It is impossible carefully to study the history of Jesus and Mary, as it is recorded by the evangelists, without perceiving a uniform law of Providence uniting them in the great events of their lives, and leading directly to the conclusions that may assist us in appreciating the importance of the part which she has ever since sustained in the extension and perfection of what was begun in the Incarnation.

To go back to the visit of the archangel to Mary. It was necessary to attract all her attention, to apprise her of the will of God, and obtain her free consent thereto. Hence, it is that the archangel saluted her in these amiable words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace." This extraordinary expression surprised her, and vividly excited her whole attention; for there is nothing that astonishes more an humble, holy person than the recital of her praises.

Then the angel said: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus." And how was the mystery of the Incarnation to be accomplished? The angel told her: "The Holy Ghost shall come over thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." (Luke, i., 31.) To put an end to all hesitation, and convince her of the fact, he represented to her the state of her cousin Elizabeth, to whom God granted a special privilege to conceive at a very advanced age. Holy Mary being fully convinced by this divine communication, did no longer refuse her consent, and said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." At that moment was accomplished, in her virginal womb, the mystery of the Incarnation.

No doubt, unless Mary had consented to become the

mother of the Redeemer, he would not have been born. Divine grace, it is true, disposed her to acquiescence ; but the act was not the less one of her own free, unfettered will ; an act which she was able to have refused ; and, by refusing, to have thwarted the Divine plans. Omnipotence might have arranged it otherwise ; but as certainly as man has been redeemed by the Incarnation and Passion of Jesus, so surely did God make the whole depend, in the first instance, on the assent and coöperation of Mary. When he created the visible universe, he said "*Fiat*"—Let it be : and it was. When he wished to redeem the world, it was by a fiat ; but this word was uttered by the lips of Mary ; "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*" But why did God not act as before, without any intermediate agent ; why did he make the execution of his plans of mercy depend on the will and the word of a feeble woman ? No one can say, because he has not revealed the reason ; we know that it is so ; and it is for us to accept it, and consider its significance.

The angel said to Mary, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." And in truth, it seems as if, from that day, he has never been separated from her. As he became man by her coöperation, he continued to act with her, and through her in his successive manifestations. Before his birth, when she visited Elizabeth, his presence in her chaste womb did not affect her pious relative till the voice of her salutation sounded in her ear ; then the babe leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb, and she was filled with the Holy Ghost. (Luke, i., 41.)

In relating the circumstances of the Nativity, the Evangelists uniformly associate Jesus with Mary, even more invariably than at first sight appears necessary.

Thus, as a sign by which to know their new-born Saviour, the shepherds at Bethlehem were told that they should "find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." (Luke, ii., 12.) And St. Luke adds, that "they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger."—(*Ib.* v., 16.) Again, when St. Matthew records the visit of the Magi, he mentions that, entering into the house they found the child, with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him. (Math., ii., 11.) In both of these instances, it might be deemed superfluous to mention the name of Mary at all; she must have been present; why then take notice of so obvious a fact, especially as it was not to visit her, but her Divine Child, that both the Magi and the shepherds went to Bethlehem. It is not superfluous, nor without a meaning. It enables us to keep steadily in view the united agency of Mary with Jesus in the progress, as well as in the beginning, of his designs of mercy. As he was incarnate by her word, so he was supported by her, as infants are at their mothers, from day to day; he was nourished from her substance, and watched and tended by her love, and closely associated with her at every step of his advancing years. Thus, also, the angel who appeared in sleep to St. Joseph commanded him to take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt. (Matt., ii., 13.) And again, when they were to return home, the angel once more directed him to take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. (*Ib.* ii. 20.) "And he arose," says St. Matthew, "and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel."—(*Ib.* v. 21.)

"After the days of Mary's purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished," says the Gospel,

“they carried the Divine Infant to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.” Here is a new and important instance of the agency of Mary. It was no empty ceremony, that offering and redemption of the infant Redeemer. “He was offered,” says the prophet Isaias, “because it was his own will.”—(Is., i, iii. 7.) It was the first instalment of the sacrifice, which from Eternity he had designed to make; when, in the language of the Psalmist he said, “Behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will; O my God, I have desired it; and thy law is in the midst of my heart.” (Ps., xxxix., 7, 9.) It was the symbolical and preparatory offering which was consummated on Calvary, and is perpetuated on our altars, for a lasting memorial of his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. And that offering was made by the hands of Mary. He lay in the hands of his blessed mother passive, and seemingly helpless, with no visible sign of his greatness, as he lies to-day, in the hands of his priest. The Omnipotent had taken upon himself our infirmity; had adopted our weakness, he could not walk, or stand, or speak. Mary must therefore sustain him; and express for him the interior, longing desire of his Eternal love, to offer himself to his Father for man, which had as yet found in him no voice to make itself known, nor capacity to carry out its intentions. Beneath the form of an infant, there lay concealed a Divine energy; that child was the very Word that had created the world; but the conditions of our humanity, within which his infinite love had circumscribed him, had imposed silence upon him, had reduced his power to feebleness and inaction. Mary was chosen, among all the generations of mankind, to stand forth, in the plenitude of grace and power, to

supply the means of action to the Infant-God; to become, for the time of this necessity, the voice of the Eternal Word. She advanced along the aisles of the solemn temple, attended by Simeon and Anna, and St. Joseph, to the place where the priest was waiting to receive her. She raised the Child in her arms, and with an overflowing heart surrendered him to the representative of his heavenly Father on earth. The first and long desired act of his Sacrifice was accomplished, he was not hers any longer, but God's—the victim of charity, ready to be immolated. The Eternal Priest, according to the order of Melchisedec, had ascended the mountain of sacrifice; and in this oblation of himself, Mary was made the great agent and minister of his will. Thus, “they presented him to the Lord.”

But the time had not yet come for the last and bloody act of his sacrifice, when the Lord would lay upon him the iniquity of us all, when the life of the victim must be taken for its expiation. His oblation of himself, though essentially one and the same, must be prolonged and reiterated through a course of years: “He must first suffer many things, and be rejected by his nation.” (Luke, xvii., 25.) His mother must therefore receive him again, to foster and mature his natural powers; to watch the growing signs of his intelligence; his advance in wisdom and age; and in grace with God and man. (Luke, ii., 52.) He was therefore ransomed, for the small sum of money prescribed by the ceremonial law; and was restored to Mary to remain for thirty years of close and inseparable union. And in the act of receiving him back, she was made the subject of a remarkable prophecy, referring to her prolonged association with him in the

designs of God. "Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel," said holy Simeon, "and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." (Luke, ii., 34, 35.) So intimately was her future life to be bound up with his, that the sorrows of his sacred heart should also pierce hers; and this with a definite object in the plans of Divine Providence. The contradictions which he was to endure were the sword which was to pierce her heart. And thus we have another proof of the continued coöperation with the Redeemer's mission, assigned to Mary, in her sufferings, no less than in her actions.

For twelve years, nothing is recorded of the Holy Family, except its annual visit to Jerusalem, at the festival of the Passover. But it is enough for us to know that Jesus and Mary lived and suffered together during all that time. Then recorded incidents, which must have happened, are more than sufficient to make even the hidden life of the Redeemer and his Mother a valuable confirmation of this fact. From what occurs daily in our own lives, we can form a very definite idea of the mutual services, the unwearied interchange of kindness that must have drawn closer and closer together those blessed hearts.

We know of the sleepless nights, the days of anxious watching, made unavoidable by the many incidents and unintelligible distresses of infancy and childhood; every one must be familiar with the endearing ways by which children entwine themselves about their mother's heart. Twelve years are soon passed over in thought; but with their measured lapse in real life, incidents without number are occurring, which would make no great figure, indeed,

in history, but which are bound up with the life of a united family. Daily necessities anticipated and provided for; innocent gratifications procured; hours of anxiety or of labor shared together; the calm and open converse in intervals of rest; courteous demeanor; the unselfish preference of each other's good; the growing esteem, and confidence, and trust in each other's worth: these are the simple means that endear the hearts of the same family to one another, and make the joys and sorrows of each the property of all. It needs no effort of imagination thus to animate those unrecorded years of the Redeemer's childhood; and to perceive the development of Mary's assimilation to his will, and of her agency in his maturing purposes.

At the age of twelve, he appears at Jerusalem, and Mary is with him. Their visit to the temple is finished; Mary and Joseph travel homeward for a whole day, but Jesus, unknown to them, remains behind. They discover their loss, and immediately return. After three days' anxious search, Jesus is found in the temple, with the doctors. Mary addresses Him: "Son, why hast thou done so to us; behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (Luke, ii., 48.) He replies: "How is it that you sought me; did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father's?" (*Ib.* v. 49.) A declaration of his Divine character, which may perhaps be thought fatal to our argument. But this is not the only instance in which the apparent meaning of our Saviour's words is singularly contrasted with the action which immediately follows. "And He went down with them," says the evangelist, "and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." (*Ib.* v. 54.) The subsequent act certainly appears

more wonderful on the very account of the language that preceded it. He must be about his Heavenly Father's business; and seemed, for that reason, to put aside human interference: yet he immediately resumes his place in the company of Mary and Joseph, and remained with them for eighteen years longer. And those were the years of his youth and early manhood, when many sons exempt themselves, or are exempted by circumstances, from filial dependence on their parents' will. Yet all the while, Jesus "was subject to them." It would have been comparatively less remarkable, if this fact had been affirmed of his childhood and infancy; it might have been thought to be more in harmony with that age, or rather the necessary consequence of it. But the inspired writer has reserved it for a time of life, when the contrast which it presents is much more conspicuous; and has connected it with the narrative of what passed in the temple, between our Lord and his Mother; thus increasing, if possible, the importance of this new feature in his life. For, as much as his words seemed to depreciate his holy mother, so much does his later subjection gain in importance. The greater the disparity between Jesus and Mary is made to appear, and the more unlikely it seems that she should command, and he obey, the more astonishing is the information that he "was subject to her." It is impossible to resist the conclusion, that, by this very objection, he was about his Father's business, that is, doing his Father's will: that Mary, therefore, by ruling, as well as he, by obeying, was furthering the mysterious operations of his mission on earth. For "whereas he learned obedience by the things which he suffered," (Heb., v., 8,) and as obedience requires some one to command, as well as a

subject to obey, it was necessary that Mary should consent to act as his Superior, to govern him, and control his will. Thus she who had become his mother, discharged in succession all the offices belonging to that relationship ; was associated with him in the performance of what his infantine weakness could not do without her assistance ; claimed, because he willed it, what his strength alone could have enabled her to receive, the obedience and subjection of God. The union, then, of Jesus and Mary, and her coöperation with him for thirty years of his life, cannot be called in question. But a time arrived when he must leave her, on his Father's business, for a little longer than before, but not forever. And as he had made up for her three days' loss of him by obeying her for eighteen years, so, on the eve of his longer absence, he gave her a precious token that her union and influence were only suspended, and that at the appointed time they should be resumed.

The circumstances of the marriage feast at Cana are familiar to everyone. The wine was exhausted, and Mary appealed to her Son : "They have no wine." His answer seemed to discourage her application : "What is it to me and to thee ; mine hour is not yet come." It was his farewell ; but he would not leave her without a parting benediction, without directing her hope to an hour of reunion. He had done her bidding for thirty years ; how could he refuse her what she had suggested rather than asked ? As once before, his action derives a peculiar value from its contrast to his words, he seems again to repel, while he is preparing to do more than the suppliant "asks or thinks." It is evident that she did not interpret his answer as a repulse, or a refusal of her

request. If he had expressly assured her that her desire should be immediately granted, she could not have acted more appropriately than she did, even after his apparently unpromising answer. She said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith to you, do it." Could anything prove more convincingly the secret union of her heart with his, her exquisite perception of the signs of his will, her keen foresight of his intentions, taught her by thirty years of intimate sympathy and intense study of his mode of action. Even after the event has interpreted the language of our Lord, and fixed its true meaning, there are persons in the world, too many, alas! who still affirm that it was meant as a refusal, and nothing more. But Mary, while the issue was to all but herself doubtful, never doubted; she turned to the servant, expecting immediate compliance with her petition, and prepared them for receiving the necessary orders. The miracle followed immediately; wine in abundance, and superior in quality to the former, filled the vessels into which the servants had poured water. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory." (John, ii., 11.) It was the closing act of his subjection to his holy mother; the beginning of a new period in his mission. Henceforth he will act, for a time at least, alone; he will fulfil his ministry and show forth his glory as a master, not as a subject.

But, as the first period of his life on earth began and ended in intimate association with Mary, so the second, or public period, began in like manner with her; the earliest attestation of his divinity was given in her presence, and because she desired it. His words, indeed, implied that the exertion of her influence was premature: "Mine hour is not yet come." The disciples at Emmaus,

when he made as though he would go farther, "constrained him," and prevailed upon him to tarry with them; Jacob wrestled with the angel a whole night till sunrise, and wrung from him a blessing ere he let him go; of Mary, as of Jacob, it might be said that she "was strong against God;" (Gen., xxxii., 28.) She was stronger than opportunity, and gained, at the beginning of her Son's ministry, a part of the benediction reserved for her at the end of it. For his words also imply that there was a time to come when her influence should be no longer premature, as there was a time past when it was all powerful. His language was at once retrospective and prospective. It was as if he would say, "for thirty years I have done thy bidding, O my mother; I have gone out and come in at thy desire; and been in all things subject to thee, but it must not be so any longer. My great mission demands my separation even from thee. But as the peaceful years of my youth were passed with thee; as thou didst watch by my crib, and admire the faith of the shepherds and wise men, and witness their adoration; the hour shall again come when thou and I shall be once more together as we were in the past; the dark hour of my Passion shall bring thee again to my side; thou shalt see a heathen soldier and a malefactor, yea the powers of nature herself pay homage to my divinity. And then I will remember thee." Thus he bade her farewell; thus he closed the first period of her influence; thus he connected it with the beginning of the new period that was opening, and anticipated its revival at a future day.

Twice, during his public ministry, did his mother cross his path, and his words on both occasions are often interpreted unfavorably to our argument. Once, he was

told that his mother and his brethren desired to speak to him. He answered, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" and pointing to his disciples: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." It was a repetition in substance of his former words: "I must be about my Father's business;" and, "mine hour is not yet come." As he was separated from his holy mother in order to fulfil the will of his heavenly Father, and more entirely to give himself to his mission, he adopted for the time all who were similarly devoted to that supreme will, who were laboring for the same great end; he admitted them to share the love and the thoughts that belonged to his mother, but which she was then withheld from personally claiming. There was a place in his divine heart sacred to the love of friends; another to the love of sinners; there was also an interior place sacred to filial affection—to the love of his mother. It was hers by nature, and doubly hers by grace, earned long and well; it was inviolable as his own unchanging truth. But that this filial love might not be wasted, while the business of his Father withheld it from its proper object, he bade it overflow upon those who most resembled his holy mother in their coöperation with the divine will. She was not excluded from her proper share; far from it. She was expressly included, for his very words remind us of the manner in which she became his mother; of the unreserved surrender of herself to his will, which secured for her that unparalleled honor, when she said, "Be it done to me according to thy word." Indeed, was there ever a disciple who carried out the will of his heavenly Father so faithfully as she did during her whole life.

At another time, a woman who was present, exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breast that gave thee suck." (Luke, xi., 27.) She was unconsciously fulfilling the inspired language of Mary herself, who had predicted that all generations should call her blessed. "Yea, rather blessed," said Christ, "are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." Again he seemed to turn attention aside from his mother, but, in reality, to establish her right to all that was claimed for her, and to much more; he did not call in question her blessedness; how could he do so, when the Holy Spirit had declared, by her own inspired lips, that she should be called blessed by all generations. He certainly recognized the blessedness which belonged to her, as his mother, by making it a subject of comparison with another and a greater benediction. She was blessed because she had borne him and nursed him, but more blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it. Was she therefore, excluded from this blessing? Far otherwise. Compare the testimony of the same evangelist: "Mary kept all these sayings, all these things, and pondered them in her heart." It was, therefore, her own greater benediction that he pronounced; it was her higher claim to a better reward, in which all who in like manner hear the word of God, and keep it, may have a share.

So far, therefore, from those instances presenting any real difficulty, they strengthen and confirm our argument most materially. They prove how intimately present to our Lord was the recollection of his mother, and of the peculiar claims which she had to his benediction. If she could not be with him personally, her place in his heart was not, therefore, vacant; her peculiar title to it was

made the condition of others' admission to a similar distinction; Jesus and Mary were still united; he remembered, and taught others to remember, that her claims to his rewards, great as they unquestionably were, because she was his mother, were not the greatest; and that if they were open to the reach of others, it must be by the way which she had already traced by her example. She, on her part, calmly awaited the coming of his promised hour, and was content.

It was no accident, nor fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, that made the summit of Mount Calvary the scene of the arrival of that promised hour. It was not on Mount Thabor, where he was transfigured, that it came, nor at the time when he rejoiced in spirit, because the mysteries of his kingdom had been revealed to little ones; nor in the short triumph which introduced him into Jerusalem a few days before he suffered; it was when the sacrifice of his life was almost consummated. If there ever was a time in his whole life, when it might be thought that the great object of his mission should necessarily exclude every other thought; when it might seem the least probable that his holy mother would resume her place by his side, and once more be distinguished by the expression of his filial love, it was surely in the hour of his death. But "there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved, standing by, he said to his mother: Woman, behold thy Son; and to the disciple: Behold thy mother." (John, xix., 25, 27.)

Every sensitive heart knows how natural it is in the hour of deep sorrow to shrink from the sight of all but those who are most intimately united to it by mutual

sympathy. The doors of the heart are closed to the most respected among ordinary friends; their condolence is offered and accepted from a distance. But Jesus, in the hour of his soul's bitter anguish, draws his mother again to his side after a period of reserve and separation; he not only admits her to suffer with him, but he pours into her heart the oil of his consolation. The prophecy of Simeon is about to be fulfilled; the Redeemer has been lifted up on the cross, for the fall and for the resurrection of many; a sword has pierced the soul of Mary that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed; and especially the thoughts that lay concealed in the heart of her Divine Son himself. Many thoughts and divine purposes, hitherto concealed, are disclosed in his last words to her. They make it impossible to conceive that her share in his mission was limited to his birth and infancy;—that after his parting from her at Cana she was thenceforth nothing to him, nor he to her, as is often falsely asserted. In making the hour of his death the hour also of her reunion with him, he contradicts such a supposition. A passing expression of his regard in the moment of his victory over the tomb, or of his triumphant Ascension, would have weighed far less, than his tender mention of her in the closing hour of his life.

His death left her where his birth had found her, close by his side; she stood to witness his closing eye, as she had first seen its opening light; to hear his last cry, as she had soothed his first; to be consoled by him, supported by his supernatural strength, as she had supported him in the time of his weakness and incapacity. And as he had to leave her alone in the world, he gave her another son, in his beloved disciple, to be to her what he himself had

been. To John he gave her as a mother; and in him to the whole church of God. It was a new mission, springing out of the first; the prolongation of her influence and coöperation in the work of the Redemption.

Lastly, after the Ascension of our Redeemer, the blessed Virgin's name occurs, as "Mary, the mother of Jesus," (Acts, i., 14,) among those who were present at the election of Mathias. No others are named but herself and the eleven Apostles; from which we infer the deference that was paid her, and the high rank that she filled in the infant church.

The whole course of the history of the Blessed Virgin then, as recorded in Scripture, uniformly exhibits her as coöperating, as an instrument, or as the Perpetual Help, in some way or other, in the mission of her Divine Son, the Redemption of mankind; and as recognised by him in this intimate relation.

The work which the Redeemer began in his Incarnation, and completed in his Passion, was not yet firmly established and secured. His kingdom was not to come all at once, nor his dominion to be immediately established on the ruins of the empire of evil; the number of his elect must be gathered in from all nations and generations of men; the merits of his Passion must be applied to the souls he has redeemed, through all succeeding ages. This great mission is carried on through his Church; she represents his divine energy; she reproduces the features of his life in her own; in her are stored up the permanent inexhaustible fruits of his Redemption. His existence began in the hour of his death; when his own mission of suffering was ended; when from his open side there flowed blood and water, to refresh and purify the inheritance of

the Lord. At Pentecost his Church came forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, fully endowed with all that was necessary to accomplish the work that was assigned to her. Since then she has never been idle, never weary in the execution of that work ; in varying fortunes, in the many changes of outward circumstances, she has prolonged and multiplied the labors of Christ's life and death through eighteen centuries, and throughout the whole world.

If Our Lord continues, then, to act through his Church, in the accomplishment of his designs, does Mary still co-operate with him ? Is her influence felt, together with his, as it was of old ? Is she associated with him still, in the continuation and completion, as in the beginning of his work of redemption of this fallen world ?

Whoever considers, with calm and impartial attention, the whole course of the life of the Blessed Virgin, and observes its invariable bearing on the great events of her Son's ministry and its uniform connexion with it, cannot doubt that her influence and co-öperation are designed to last till the end of time. They were extended too far during her life on earth, to make any other conclusion probable. If Christ had merely been born and reared by her fostering care, and had then left her to accomplish his mission, if the veil had closed upon her history at Nazareth, and no futher mention of her had been made in the inspired narrative of his life ; there would even then have been cause enough to deem it probable that more had occurred than had been recorded, and that the term of his childhood was not the end of her union and co-operation with him. But with the additional information regarding his maturer years, afforded by the Evangelist ; with the knowledge that he chose to be subject to her till he was

thirty years of age ; that he allowed himself, as it were, to be constrained by her intercession to work his first miracle, that he drew her again to his side, and disposed events so as to console her, in the time of his agony ; and finally, with the recollection that the last time she is named in Scripture, it is in the august society of the eleven apostles ; it is impossible to think that her share in the work that brought her Divine Son from heaven is at an end, or that such an extension of her influence, beyond what the necessity of the case, according to human foresight, seemed to require, could have any other consistent or legitimate termination than the conclusion of the vast undertaking, whose beginning depended on her consent.

The first evangelical prophecy, also, spoken by God to the deceiver of our race, points to the union of the woman and her seed in their hostility to the devil and his seed. The devil and his seed are inseparable enemies of the woman and her seed, who must therefore, by parity of condition, be inseparable also. Even the variety of expression, "She shall bruise," or "It shall bruise thy head," against which exception is often taken, illustrates the identity of operation that unites the woman of prophecy and her seed ; and hence it is in reality indifferent whether one reading or the other is adopted, for the woman triumphs in her seed, and neither her seed nor his triumph could be without her coöperation. Till the final destruction of the deceiver and his seed, it is evident that the woman and her seed must coexist as the divinity appointed agents of that destruction. The first words of the prediction, at least, admit of no equivocal interpretation. "I will put enmities between thee and

the woman, between thy seed and her seed." While hostility is possible between sin and holiness, between God and the evil one, so long must Mary and her Son coöperate in sustaining it, in pushing it to extremity, and finally, in destroying its objects. The only term of her influence and united action is the term of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "Afterwards the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when he shall have brought to nought all principality and all authority and power, and the enemy, death shall be destroyed." (I. Cor., xv., 24, 26.)

Accordingly, the Church of Christ has ever regarded Mary's influence as powerfully affecting its own destiny. It does not assign her a merely historical position in the system of Christianity; or as if she had merited great honor only as the author of Christ's being in time. Mary is regarded by the Church as the centre of a living energy; as exercising a protecting and fostering care over the representative of her Son on earth. Her position of superintendence over the destinies of the Church is the divine appointment of Christ himself, who chose to be subject to her, during thirty years of his life; it is the reward of her singular conformity to the will of his Heavenly Father. The Church of Christ, therefore, cannot believe that Mary's patronage is more inconsistent with the supreme majesty of God, than was the subjection of that very God to her, while he lived on earth. God willed it to be so then, as he wills it now, that Mary should coöperate with him in the care of his Church. It could not be, unless he willed it. Now if it is his will, who can call it in question, or who can suggest an arrangement more in harmony with his revealed word; or one that redounds more to his sovereign honor?

But what need is there of Mary's interposition at the present day? Does it not seem to disparage the power or the mercy of God? The need of her interposition is neither less nor greater than it was in the beginning of the Church. God so willed it then, that the Incarnation should, in a measure, depend on her; if he still wills it, that the full accomplishment of all its results should, in part at least, depend on her, then her interposition is still needful. The disparagement to his mercy and power is not greater now than it was then. Mary was created by his power, as the chief instrument of his mercy. All that her influence now accomplishes, and all that it shall obtain till the end of time, is therefore due to his infinite and omnipotent goodness as to its first cause.

We read in Holy Scripture that as soon as "Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."—(Luke, i., 41.) Mary had then conceived the Holy One; her chaste womb then embraced him who is the source of all grace; she was, therefore, at that moment, the treasury of grace. And through her, grace flowed in a plentiful stream upon all who approached her. Hence, has arisen the universal opinion that she has become from that moment, the great channel of grace to the Church, sending along its blessed stream, from the fountain-head, which is God, to refresh and fructify the garden of the Lord. As sin came into the world through Eve, grace came through Mary, with Jesus Christ, who was born of her, and ever remains her Son.

Sin would not have entered this world, had Eve not listened to the serpent, and furthered his wicked designs by her wilful coöperation; in like manner, had Mary not

listened favorably to the angel, and thus coöperated with God in the work of the Incarnation, Christ would not have been born of her—the fountain of grace would have remained sealed. He that gave his Son to the world through the agency of Mary, has with him given all things to the world through her.

If therefore you believe that Jesus Christ came to us through Mary, believe also that the graces which he merited for us, must come to us through his mother. If you believe that Mary was a help in our Redemption, believe also that she is a help in our sanctification; if you believe that, without her, you were not redeemed, believe also, that without her, you will not be saved; if without Mary, you could not have a Redeemer to open heaven to you, neither shall you have heaven without Mary's assistance; if the Redeemer came to you through Mary, it is also through Mary that you must come to behold the Redeemer in heaven in his glory for all eternity. If you believe in the beautiful order of nature, you must believe also in the order of grace; for the order of nature was established for the order of grace; or to speak more plainly, God wished that his own mother should be your mother also, not by name only, but in very deed. He wished, that she should be looked upon and honored as the Perpetual Help, or Intercessor for the welfare of the whole world, the help of sinners to obtain their conversion, and the help of the just, to obtain for them grace to advance and persevere in justice and holiness of life.

It is an article of faith that to invoke the saints, in order that they may, by their intercession, obtain for us God's blessings, is not only lawful, but also a useful and holy practice. But as to the intercession of Mary, St Alphon-

sus says, "that it is even necessary for our salvation; necessary, not indeed absolutely, but morally. We affirm that this necessity arises from the will of God itself, who has ordained that all his graces should pass through the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, which may well be considered at the present day as the common opinion of doctors and theologians. And this doctrine is entirely in conformity with the sentiments of the Church who, in the public prayers, approved by her, teaches us to pray constantly to this divine mother, and invoke her as the *Health* of the weak, the *Refuge* of sinners, the *Help* of Christians, our *Life*, and our *Hope*, and our *Salvation*—expressions which signify the need we have of the intercession of Mary.

"But here a modern author remarks: 'If all graces pass through Mary, when we implore the intercession of the saints, they, too, must have recourse to the mediation of Mary to obtain for us these graces. This, however,' says he, 'no one believes, or has even thought of.'

"I reply, that there can be no error or difficulty in believing this. What difficulty is there in saying that God, in order to honor his mother, having crowned her as queen of the saints, and having ordained that all graces should be dispensed by her hands, would have the saints also to invoke her, in order to obtain favors for their clients? As to saying that 'no one has even thought of it,' I find that St. Bernard, St. Anslem, St. Bonaventure, Father Suarez, and others expressly assert it. 'In vain,' says St. Bernard, 'would one pray to the other saints for a favor, if Mary did not intercede to obtain it for them,' (See Glories of Mary, Chapt. v.)

This being the state of the case, the question of Mary's

Perpetual Help in relation to our sanctification is evidently not one of mere theory, nor an abstract matter, with which we have no practical concern, which may be accepted or not, indifferently; whose reception will do no good, or whose rejection will not injure. If the whole tenor of our Lord's life, if the universal and immemorial habit of the Church, if the pious custom of millions of holy souls all coincide in attributing to the Mother of Jesus, an uninterrupted fellowship with her Son in the great work of the Redemption, and in everything that tends to its final accomplishment, the establishment of such a fact must impress every mind with the relative importance of availing ourselves of this divine institution of the powerful intercession of Mary.

28. Why are the prayers of the saints so powerful?

Because the saints are the friends of God, and, therefore, their prayers are more agreeable to him than those of sinners.

St. Thomas says that all the saints in heaven are powerful to assist us when inspired by God to do so. Now, when we pray to the saints, and especially to the Mother of God, it is not from want or weakness of faith, as non-Catholics falsely assert. The faith of the centurion in the Gospel is highly praised by our Lord himself; and yet the centurion sent to the Redeemer "the ancients of the law" to intercede with him to heal his servant. (Matt., viii., 5) Nor is it from want of confidence in the mercy of God and in the merits of Jesus Christ that we invoke the saints, and especially the Blessed Virgin Mary; but we pray to them, because we distrust our own unworthiness, firmly believing that, if the saints, and especially the holy Mother of God, join their prayers to

ours, and interpose their influence with God in our behalf, we shall sooner receive from God the favors which we wish to obtain.

St. Paul had great confidence in the prayers of the saints on earth, for he says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, to help me in your prayers for me to God." God honors the saints by hearing their prayers. He grants to them as to his friends, many blessings which he refuses to his enemies. But God honors especially his mother by hearing her prayers, which are more powerful with him than the prayers of all the angels and saints united.

Mary is made *Mater Dei*, the "Mother of God." Behold two words, the full meaning of which can never be comprehended either by man or angels. To be Mother of God is, as it were, an infinite dignity; for the dignity of a son redounds to the honor of his mother. Now as there can be no son of greater excellence than the Son of God, so there can be no greater mother than the Mother of God. St. Thomas asks, whether God could make creatures still more perfect than those already created, and he answers—yes, he can, except three, *i. e.*: (1) the Incarnation of the Son of God, (2) the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and (3) the everlasting beatitude of the saints in heaven;—in other words, God can create numberless worlds, all different from one another in beauty, but he cannot make anything greater than the Incarnation of Christ, the maternity of the Blessed Virgin, and the happiness of the blessed in heaven. But why can he not? Because God himself is concerned in, and most intimately united to, each of these works, and is their object. "*Hæc*

tria Deum involvunt et pro objecto habent," says St. Thomas Aquinas. Now, as there is nothing greater than God, there cannot be a work greater than any of those with which his Divinity is so intimately united. As there can be no man more perfect than Christ, because he is the Man-God, and as there can be no greater happiness than the beatific vision, and enjoyment and possession of God in heaven, where the soul is, as it were, transformed into God, and most inseparably united to his nature, so, also, no mother can be made more perfect than the Mother of God. These three works are, in a certain sense, of infinite dignity on account of being so intimately united to God, the Infinite Good. There cannot then be anything better, greater or more perfect than those three works, because there cannot be anything better than God himself. The Blessed Virgin gave birth to Christ, who is the natural Son of God the Father, both as God and as man. Christ, then, as man, is the Son both of the Blessed Virgin and of God the Father. Behold, in what intimate relation she stands with the Blessed Trinity, she having brought forth the same Son, whom God the Father has generated from all eternity.

Moreover, the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God without a father; she was both mother and father to Jesus Christ. Hence she is the mother of her Divine Son far more truly than other mothers are the mothers of their children, for Christ received of the Blessed Virgin alone his human nature, and he is indebted to his mother for all that he is as man. Hence, Christ, by being conceived and born of the Blessed Virgin, became, in a certain sense, her debtor, and is under more obligations to her for being his mother, than other children are to

their parents. Truly, this dignity of the mother of God is great!

If Mary then, is the Mother of God, what must be her love for God! Our love for a thing is in proportion to our knowledge of its value. Now, who had ever a greater knowledge of God than Mary? If the knowledge of God possessed by all the angels and saints were united in one soul, it would be but as a drop of water when compared with the ocean of love contained in the soul of Mary. And why? Because, Mary being the Mother of God, her Divine Son, in order to show his love and reverence for her, was obliged to make her as happy as possible. Now true happiness consists in the love of God, the Supreme Good.—The greater this love, the greater also is the happiness of the soul. It is then quite natural for us to think that God must have given his mother a love as intense, and as ardent as it was possible for her to receive, and consequently, a knowledge of himself in proportion to the love she was to have for him.

Moreover, Jesus Christ is the only Son of God the Father; by him alone he is generated as the Divine Word; he is also the only Son of Mary, his mother, because it was from her alone that he received his whole human nature by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. Hence, as he is the Son of God without a mother in heaven, so also is he the Son of man without a father on earth. And this is the reason of the quite singular and reciprocal love, both of the Blessed Virgin towards Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ towards his virgin mother. The love of a child for his parents is generally divided between father and mother; hence, it suffers diminution. But in Jesus Christ it was a filial love which was un-

divided ; it was whole and entire, for his mother alone ; it was then immense, and of the most ardent nature. In like manner, the Blessed Virgin's love for Jesus Christ was undivided. She being to him both mother and father, she loved him with a father's and mother's love. She knew, moreover, that he was not only her Son, but also her God ; and therefore she loved him with unbounded love.

But what is most encouraging and most consoling for us who live in this valley of tears, is, that the love of the Blessed Virgin for us poor sinners is in proportion to her love for God. God wished her to be his mother ; consequently, he wished also that she should be our mother ; it was for our sake that the Son of God became man ; it was then also, for our sake, that the Blessed Virgin became the Mother of God and our mother.

She is the Mother of Christ ; hence, as Christ has loved us with unspeakable love, so as to give his life for us, so Mary, too, loves us as the children of Christ. Jesus Christ is her Son ; but of everyone who is a perfect Christian, it may be said, that not he himself lives, but that Jesus Christ lives in him ; hence, it may be said to Mary, speaking of every good Christian : Behold thy son !

If Jesus Christ required great love of Peter in order to be worthy of being the head of the Church, what love must he not require in the Blessed Virgin, who was the mother of the Church ? What is most peculiar to a mother ? Is it not love, affection, a constant solicitude for the welfare of her children ? Is not a mother's love proverbial ? What must then be the Blessed Virgin's love for us ? Did she not carry mercy itself in her blessed womb during nine months ? She must then be

all penetrated and glowing with divine love. Again, did she not offer and sacrifice her Son on the Cross for us, so as to be able to say: I have loved you so much as to deliver up my Son to so cruel a death.

What is Holy Communion? Do we not receive in it her Divine Son, Jesus Christ? Indeed, O Virgin, who can measure the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of thy charity and goodness for men? O what consolation for us who have in heaven a *Father* who is *God*, and a *Mother* who is the Mother of God!

If Mary is the Mother of God, what wonder then that God has glorified and will glorify, through all ages, her power of intercession with him and her mercy for all men? The eternal Father has chosen Mary to be the mother of his only Son; the Holy Spirit chose her as his spouse; the Son, who has promised a crown in heaven to the apostles who preached his word, is bound in justice to do more for the mother who bore him, the eternal Word. If you believe in honoring your mother, remember that he believes in honoring and glorifying his.

The apostles did not enter upon their office of intercession till the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; after that, whatever they should ask the Father in Christ's name, they were certainly to receive. Mary began her office of intercession at Cana; its commencement was inaugurated by Christ's first miracle. It is true, his answer seems at first unfavorable. But observe how every circumstance of that event strengthens the Catholic view of our Lord's conduct. Mary's faith in her Son's power, and in his willingness to grant her request, never wavered, even when he seemed to make a difficulty. Whether his words had a meaning wholly

different from that ordinarily attached to them now, or whether she, whose heart was as his own, read his consent in the tone of his voice, or in the glance of his eye, her only answer was the words addressed to the servants: "Whatever he shall say to you, do it," evidently proving that she never for an instant doubted the favorable issue of her request. Now, if what appeared to be an unreasonable exercise of Mary's influence resulted in a miracle, and the first of his public miracles; and if he predicted the coming of an hour when the exercise of her influence should no longer be unseasonable, as his words clearly imply, what prodigies must not her intercession effect at the present time! She is now exalted to the throne of her Divine Son in heaven. Now, if she could thus prevail with God in her lowliness, what can she not obtain now in her exalted state?

We rarely hear of Mary, but in connexion with a miraculous demonstration of the power of God. She was conceived as no other human being ever was conceived: From the very moment of her conception she was holy. By divine privilege she was conceived without original sin, and by special grace she was always free from actual sin.

She, again, conceived her Son and God in a miraculous manner, by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. She preserved her virginity in her conception. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." (Isai., vii., 14.)

Our Saviour, says St. Augustine, was to be born of a virgin, according to the flesh, in order to teach us by this great miracle that his followers were to be born again, according to the spirit, of another virgin, which is the holy Catholic Church.

Mary also preserved her virginity at the the birth of our Saviour. "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son," which evidently proves that her conception and delivery caused no change in the supernatural state of her virginity. Not only is our word conceived in our intellectual faculty, but it even comes forth by an intelligible expression without any diminution in our intellectual powers. In like manner, the Word Incarnate came forth from the womb of Mary without affecting her virginity in the slightest degree. The Son of God came to destroy sin, and efface every moral stain thereof from the soul of man. How could it then be supposed that he commenced the glorious work of human redemption, by causing any stain or blemish to the honor and glory of his mother? He came to inculcate the divine maxims of the Gospel on the minds and hearts of children, in order that they might respect and revere their parents. Now, would his doctrine have produced any salutary effect, if, at his birth, he had lessened the glory and dignity of his mother's virginity? To prove to the world that he had assumed our human nature, he seemed to be born of a woman; but to manifest his divinity, he was born of a virgin. As he was conceived in a supernatural manner, he was not subject to the ordinary course of nature; but at the moment of his birth, he miraculously came forth into the hands of his virgin mother like a splendid flower on its stem, and holy Mary prostrated herself in profound adoration before him. "The lily of virginity shall bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with great joy and praise; and all nations shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God." (Isai., xxxv., 2.)

Miracles attended the visit paid by the Blessed Virgin

to her cousin Elizabeth. The birth of her Divine Child was accompanied by many striking prodigies. When she carried him in her arms to present him in the temple, behold, new miracles followed her steps ! The first miracle of her Divine Son was performed at her request ; she took part in the awful mystery of the Passion ; she shared in the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost. In a word, miracles seem to have been the order in her life, the absence of miracles, the exception ; so that we are as little surprised to find her surrounded by them, as we should be astonished to hear of them in connection with ourselves. Mary was a living miracle. Her first and strongest title to our love and homage is the indelible character of glory communicated to her by the miracle of the Incarnation, by which God became man of her substance ; the Eternal became subject to the laws of time and space ; the Infinite was comprehended in the form of an infant ; the invisible Creator of the universe became visible to the eyes of his creatures. Her coöperation was necessary before that miracle could take place ; a portion of its splendor, therefore, rests forever on her royal head. She has earned for herself, through her correspondence with God's grace, new titles of honor and renown ; but the mystery of the Incarnation lies at the foundation of her greatness. With that mystery, continued in a certain sense in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, she, too, is intimately connected, inasmuch as the sacred Humanity which we worship there, in union with the Divinity of Jesus Christ, was assumed from her virginal flesh and blood.

Hence, it does not surprise us that she should continue to be a centre of miraculous action ; we are prepared for

it by her whole previous history. It seems to be the law of her being; she represents to us the most stupendous miracle that the world ever witnessed. It seems therefore almost natural, that she should be able to suspend here and there, the course of natural events by the power of her intercession. All that we know of her miraculous power now, is but little when compared with the prodigies which were effected through her agency during her earthly career. She saluted her cousin Elizabeth; and when that holy woman "heard her salutation, she was filled with the Holy Ghost." She addressed her Divine Son at the marriage feast and said, "They have no more wine;" and immediately the filial charity, which had bound him to her for thirty years, constrained him to comply with her request. He, whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Heavenly Father, seemed to make the will of Mary the law of his action rather than his own. Again, there was a moment when the mystery of the Incarnation hung upon the word of her lips; the destiny of the world depended upon an act of her will. When God wished to create the world, "He spoke, and it was done;" when he wished to redeem the world, he left it to the consent of his creature, and that creature was Mary. She said, "Be it done to me according to thy word," and the miracle of all miracles, the mystery of all mysteries, was consummated, "God was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

After all we have said, what difficulty is there in believing it possible that the Blessed Virgin has wrought this miracle or that; has cured this person or that. These miraculous interpositions are as nothing, when compared with those miracles which we must believe, unless we would forfeit the very name of Christian.

And as there is nothing too great for the power of the Blessed Virgin, so there is nothing too insignificant for her notice. While she fights the battles of the universal Church, she cares for the salvation of the least of Christ's little ones; she is always ready to console and refresh their fainting spirits, to procure for them even the smallest actual grace. From the holy virgin martyr, who in the first ages of the Church invoked the aid of Mary against the demon of impurity, to the youth who kneels to-day before her altar, imploring the preservation of his innocence or the restoration of lost-virtue, it has never been heard that anyone who fled to her protection, implored her assistance, or asked her prayers, was left unheeded.

Number, if you can, those who through the intercession of Mary have been restored to life, how many sick have been cured, how many captives have been set at liberty, how many have been delivered by Mary who were in danger of perishing by fire, in danger of shipwreck, in danger of war and pestilence. Number all the kingdoms which she has founded, all the empires which she has preserved; to how many armies that put themselves under her protection has she not given victory over their enemies? Call to mind Narses, the general of the emperor Justinian; was it not through Mary that he gained the victory over the Goths; and was not the victory of Heraclius over the Persians due to Mary? Plagius I. sought her aid, and slew 80,000 Saracens; Basil, the emperor, defeated the Saracens by her assistance; Godfrey of Bouillon, defeated, through her assistance, the Saracens, and regained Jerusalem. Through her Alfonsus VIII., King of Castile, slew 200,000 Moors with the loss of scarcely 20 or 30 Christians; Pius V. obtained through her

intercession the celebrated victory over the Turks. How many heresies has she not crushed! It was she who animated St. Athanasius and St. Gregory Thaumaturgus to defend the Church against the Arians. It was she who animated St. Cyrillus to defend the doctrine of the Church against the Nestorians; it was she who inspired St. Augustine to raise his voice against the Pelagians; it was she who encouraged St. John Damascene to attack the fierce heresy of the Iconoclasts; it was she who animated St. Dominic to defend the doctrine of the Church against the Albigenses; it was she who filled St. Ignatius Loyola with undaunted courage to battle against the baneful heresy of Luther; it was she who inspired St. Alphonsus de Liguori to take up arms against the poisonous serpents of Jansenism and Gallicanism; it is she who has inspired so many persons to consecrate themselves to God in the religious and apostolic life.

These public manifestations of her powers recorded in the history of the Church are indeed wonderful; but her secret influence—the influence which she exerts over the hearts of men, over human passions and motives of action, over the invisible enemies of our salvation, is even more wonderful, more comprehensive. This influence is felt through the whole church; it is of hourly occurrence; those who have felt its gentle operation can bear witness to the truth of its existence. One, for instance, sets his heart upon obtaining from the Blessed Virgin the recovery or conversion of a dear friend; another prays for the clear manifestation of the divine will in his regard at some critical period of his life; another prays for some special favors; they begin a *Novena* to Mary, and ere it is ended; their prayer is heard, In their daily strife with sin and

temptation, the name of Mary acts as a spell upon the spirits of evil. If they at times give way to pride and contempt of others, they invoke the aid of Mary, and their hearts become kind and humble. Does the thought of impurity cross their mind, they call upon her name; they raise their eyes towards her throne, and the demon flies from them. Number, if you can, all the sinners who have been converted through Mary; number the just who have become perfect through her; how many there are who have received the grace of purity through her; how many there are who have obtained through her the grace to overcome their passions; how many who have already obtained through her the crown of life everlasting. Behold a St. Augustine, a St. John Damascene, a St. Germanus, a St. Anslem, a St. Bonaventure, a St. Bernard, a St. Dominic, a St. Vincent Ferrer, a St. Xavier, a St. Alphonsus; behold that countless multitude of saints, who on account of their sanctity have shone like suns in the heavens. Was it not through Mary that they became holy? Have they passed through any other gate, than through the gate of Mary? These are the hourly triumphs of Mary's power; the secret, but conclusive, evidence of the queenly authority with which she is invested for the welfare of the faithful.

Is it then strange that we rejoice in the name, in the dignity, in the glory of Mary? Would it not, on the contrary, be strange indeed, were we to be slow in proclaiming her praise? If God has endowed the Blessed Mother of his only begotten Son with such power and dominion, have we no obligations to fulfil towards her who is the Mother of our God and our most gracious queen? She is the Mother of God; therefore you must honor her as

such. She is full of grace ; therefore she deserves your praise. She is full of mercy ; therefore she deserves your confidence. She is the queen of the saints, and your queen ; and therefore she is entitled to your homage. She is an object of complacency to the Heavenly Father, who loves his daughter ; she is an object of complacency to the Son of God, who loves his mother ; she is an object of complacency to the Holy Ghost, who loves her as his spouse. Honor and love Mary, and the Heavenly Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost will take delight in you.

Mary is the mother of God ; it is she who has been chosen out of thousands ; hence God has ordained that all nations should call her blessed, and should honor her with filial and heartfelt devotion ; for he who is the Almighty has done great things unto her ; thus has he willed it ; thus has he decreed it, and as he has willed, so has it been done.

Not to love and honor Mary with a sincere heart, must proceed either from culpable neglect, or from want of faith in the divine revelation, and in the wise plans of Providence. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me," said our Blessed Lord to his apostles ; his words apply with greater force to his holy mother ; and "he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Far from us be the unworthy fear that, by having recourse to Mary, we should disparage the honor of Christ. The more we look up to her, the higher must her Divine Son rise in our regard ; for his glory exceeds hers as the inherent splendor of the sun surpasses the borrowed light of the moon, as the Divine Creator excels his most gifted creature. We cannot love, and honor, and pray to Mary, without loving and honoring him who has made her so worthy of love.

And we cannot love him as he ought to be loved, without being especially drawn towards his Blessed Mother. If we love him we must imitate him to the best of our power; we must imitate him especially in his filial love and reverence for his Blessed Mother.

The saints have always made his love for his Blessed Mother the model of their love for that most holy Virgin. To name the saints who were deeply devoted to Mary would be to name them all. The more they strove to love God, the more they felt drawn to love Mary, or to speak more correctly, the more they increased in love of Mary, the more they increased also in love for God.

The church has never grown weary of praising and honoring Mary. Consider the many days in the year that are consecrated to her honor; consider how frequently and how solemnly are her feasts celebrated. Call to mind the many hymns which have been composed in her honor. She is extolled by the clergy, both regular and secular, extolled by all nations, esteemed and honored by all that are of good will and truly sincere heart. But whosoever would conceive a true idea of the power of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, whosoever would fairly estimate the heartfelt loyalty of Christians for their heavenly queen and mother, must pass into Catholic lands and observe the fervent multitudes that crowd the sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Countless, indeed, and unspeakably great are the favors which God hourly grants to men at the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. How many conversions are not made from heresy, or from infidelity every day through Mary's direct interposition! Many have been brought into the true fold by the prayers of their friends addressed to her;

others by wearing her medal ; others by invoking her in time of need ; others by observing the devotion of Catholic friends to her, and the beautiful charities, the gentleness and unselfishness which are apt to spring from that devotion. Although it is in reality a far greater miracle to bring about the conversion of a soul than to raise the dead to life, yet men are generally more filled with admiration at miracles of this latter kind. In order, therefore, to give us the most striking proofs that Mary is Our Perpetual Help in all our necessities, God has selected places—certain sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin, in which He performs more miracles and hears our prayers more readily than he does in other places.

“ It is true,” says St. Augustine, “ that God is everywhere, and that he who created all things is not confined to any particular place ; it is true, that he must be worshipped in secret—in spirit and in truth ; that so hearing in secret, he may also justify and reward in secret. Nevertheless it is undeniably certain, that God does make a difference between one place and another, though we cannot always tell the reason of such preference.” Did not God himself, by the mouth of Moses, promise that he would choose a place for his people, that his name might be there ? And did not Solomon pray at the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem, that God would hearken to the supplications of his people in *this place* ? And did not God promise that his eyes and his heart would be there always, and that he would hear the prayers of those who would worship him in that holy place ? There were many pools in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, but yet it was only to the pool of Bethesda that the angel came ; it was only its waters that were moved ; it was only its waters that possessed the miraculous healing power.

The holy Church, therefore, cherishes a special devotion towards certain sanctuaries, believing, as she does, that God wishes to honor his saints, especially his Blessed Mother, by making more frequent and more wonderful manifestations of his presence in these places than in others. No wonder, then, that the Church condemned as rash, mischievous, and contrary to the pious custom of the faithful (Bull, *Auctorem fidei*, prop. 70) that declaration of the Synod of Pistora, which rejected all special *cultus* of one image of a saint in preference to another; no wonder that theologians lay it down as a principle acknowledged by all doctors, and placed beyond dispute, that God sometimes prefers one place of devotion to another.

Experience, however, teaches that such holy places are found in those countries only where the people entertain great love and devotion towards the Blessed Mother of God. In the Catholic countries of Europe, for instance, there is scarcely a hamlet, a town, or a city, which is not consecrated to the dear Mother of God. When a Catholic nation was about to engage in battle against their enemies, they went to pray before the shrine of Mary; they came back victorious, and in gratitude they raised the sanctuary of *Our Lady of Victories*. When perishing by the scourge of pestilence, they made a *Novena* to the Blessed Mother of God; their prayers were heard, and they built the sanctuary of *Our Lady of Help*.

The shipwrecked mariner, saved by the intercession of Mary from the fury of the storm—from a watery grave, raises a modest chapel at the friendly port that receives him, and calls it by the sweet name of Mary—*Mary, Star of the Sea*.

A poor, benighted traveller attacked by highway robbers succeeds happily in converting one of the number,

by his prayers and charitable words, and the place of this miraculous conversion receives the name of *Our Lady of the Robbers*.

In this way all Europe became filled with sanctuaries raised to commemorate some particular favor received through Mary's intercession. And calling to mind the many extraordinary favors received from Mary in some particular sanctuary of hers, the people call upon Our Lady of Loretto; Our Lady of Einsiedlen; Our Lady of Fourvière; Our Lady of Puy; Our Lady of La Salette; Our Lady of Lourdes; Maria Zell, Our Lady of Guadalupe, etc. Thus all Europe is filled with sanctuaries of our Blessed Lady. There sacred processions sweep through the streets; long trains of pilgrims wind along the banks of the rivers, or through the green-wood, to a favored chapel of our Lady; the sweet face of the Virgin Mother smiles upon you as you pass the way-side shrine; there the hum of business is stilled, and there the traveller bares his head for a moment's communion with God, as the angelus bell rings from the neighboring steeple; there the very mile-stones of the road-side become niches which speak to us of love and devotion to Mary.

It is impossible for those, who have never visited the towns and villages of a catholic country, to conceive the feeling of delight with which the pious traveller is affected at the sight of so many images of the Blessed Virgin placed at the angle of streets, in squares and public places, on bridges, fountains, and obelisks, or between the stalls of a village market or fair. Each statue or holy image has its lantern, and is decorated with flowers which the people of the neighborhood renew every morning at day-break. There the sweet name of Mary is the most fami-

liar of household words ; there the poet chants her praises ; there the painter and sculptor—the masters of art—love to reproduce her pure, maternal face ; and there even the very Protestant has not yet learned to speak of her with disrespect, nor utterly banish all love for her from his heart. It is on account of this great love for the Blessed Mother of God, that there is not a province but has its own favorite image, its own favorite sanctuary of Our Lady, and linked with that image some legend, which marks that spot as a chosen abode, selected for the outpourings of her maternal favors.

From the firm belief that such spots are more highly favored than others, and that prayers offered there are more readily heard, the pious practice has arisen of making public or private pilgrimages to these holy places, in order to obtain some particular favor, or to render thanks to God through his Blessed Mother, for favors obtained. For, if God sends us so many favors through Mary as their channel—the channel naturally the most agreeable to him—we are impelled to return our thanks through the same blessed channel. When our hearts are filled with emotions of gratitude or veneration, we naturally seek to give vent to our feelings by some outward act of devotion ; and hence the faithful have, in all ages, formed solemn processions, have made long pilgrimages, to some favorite shrine of the Madonna, in order to express their love and devotion to their beloved Queen.

In these sanctuaries of Our Blessed Lady may be seen votive offerings, ornaments of gold and silver, and precious stones, in commemoration of miraculous cures, or other extraordinary favors, obtained through the intercession of Mary, by those who invoked her at her holy

shrine. In these sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin the blind are restored to sight, the lame walk, the dead are raised to life, demons are expelled from the bodies of men. These are authentic facts, attested not only by persons of note, who have heard them from others, but by thousands of eye-witnesses, whose sincerity we cannot doubt; they are facts so numerous that, if they were all written, the world itself, I think, could not contain the books; they are facts which plainly tell us, that, since God is pleased to assist us in all our necessities, spiritual and temporal, through Mary, it is also in Mary that we are to seek and to find our Perpetual Help, or Intercessor, in the work of our sanctification. God has given us in our own times, a striking proof in confirmation of this truth in the miraculous picture of our Lady of Perpetual Help, which is in St. Alphonsus' Church of the Redemptorist Fathers in Rome, Italy. God has been pleased to perform numberless miracles before this shrine; nay, he has even been pleased to perform miracles and grant extraordinary favors to many persons who had recourse to the intercession of his Blessed Mother, under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. These miracles, then, and these extraordinary favors, tell us most plainly that God has made his ever Blessed Mother our Perpetual Help and refuge in this valley of tears, and that, if we confidently have recourse to her intercession, we shall find in her a channel of ever flowing grace. And we, especially, who live in a country which is as yet more infidel than Catholic—where we are constantly surrounded by dangers of every kind, should bear in mind that we stand more particularly in need of the intercession of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary.

If we consider how the anti-Catholic pulpit and lecture-

room, the press and the bar-room reëcho, against the Catholic Church, the false charges of idolatry, of taking from God the honor due to him alone, and giving it to a creature; if we consider how even the most charitable of our enemies shake their heads and bewail what they call the unfortunate propensity of the Roman Catholics to give too much honor to Mary; if we consider how many temptations surround the Catholics here; how hard it is to bear contempt, misrepresentation, and wilful falsehood; how much easier it is to hide a delicate and beloved sentiment than to expose it to the risk of a sneer; how swift the pace of the money-hunter is here, how little the beautiful in life and faith is cultivated, and how devoted men are to what they are pleased to call the practical, and which means simply more careful, diligence for the body than for the soul—for time than for eternity—if we consider all this, the wonder is, not that there is so much or so little devotion to Our Lady, but that there is any devotion at all. Yet in spite of all this, we believe that there is no Catholic country in Europe; that there never has been a country in which reverent love and earnest, heart-felt devotion for the Blessed Mother of God is more deeply rooted, more ardently cherished, or more fervently practised than in this country. This devotion to Mary guides and influences the hearts of men, and it is found pure and glowing, in the souls even of those who seem to be most engrossed in worldly affairs. This devotion begins in earliest childhood, when the scapular and the medal are placed around the neck of the babe, to remain there even to the hour of death. As the child grows up, he associates himself with some Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. As soon as he has grown up to manhood he joins some

benevolent society, which is placed under the special patronage of the Queen of angels. The daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation, of Loretto, etc., train up our young girls; the Brothers of Mary devote themselves to the education of our youth. The Bishop labors patiently till his seminary of St. Mary is completed; the priest toils arduously until his parish of the Annunciation or of the Assumption is established; all join their prayers, their counsel, their wealth, their labor, their self-denial, until the cross towers through the green wood from the convent of Mary's Help, and the church of the Immaculate crowns the summit of the hill.

In the Council held in Baltimore, 1846, the assembled Fathers—twenty-two Bishops with their theologians—solemnly chose the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate, as Patroness of the United States of America. These Fathers of the Council had been trained to honor the Blessed Mother of God, they had labored in her service; they desired to add this crowning glory to all that they had done in her honor during a long life of labor and prayer; they wished at the same time to show their zeal for the true interests of this country by placing the entire United States under her protection in this solemn and public manner. On the following year this election was confirmed by the Sovereign Pontiff, and from that time in all public sessions that close these august assemblies, after the *Te Deum* has been chanted, the cantors, richly vested, stand before the altar, and intone their first acclamation to the Most High. As soon as that solemn hymn of praise is ended, they burst forth in the words, "*Beatissimae Virgini Mariae sine labe originali conceptae, harum Provinciarum Patronae, honor aeternus.*" And in chorus, the venerable

Bishops, the theologians and attendant priests, and the whole multitude of people, repeat the glad acclamation, and then, swelling to vaulted roof, and filling the aisles of the grand cathedral, rolls in deep, majestic chorus, Amen ! Amen !

Ever since that solemn act, Mary has gained vast possessions in this country ; and we may confidently hope that she will conquer it all, and annex it all to the kingdom of her Divine Son. Love and devotion towards Mary is on the increase. This love for the Mother of God is a good omen—she will not fail to show openly that she is the Patroness of this country and the Perpetual Help of all who invoke her holy name.

The spirit of infidelity and religious indifference is spreading rapidly in every direction. All the ills which an immoral and infidel press entail upon society, all the crimes arising from a godless education, menace the destruction of every vestige of Christian modesty, piety and innocence. Nothing better can be opposed to this infernal serpent, than love and devotion towards her whose office it is to crush the serpent's head whenever it makes itself visible.

Ah ! how truly does not St. Alphonsus de Liguori assert that "the salvation of all depends upon preaching Mary, and confidence in her intercession." We know that St. Bernard of Sienna sanctified Italy ; St. Dominic converted many provinces ; St. Louis Bertrand, in all his sermons, never failed to exhort his hearers to practise devotion towards Mary ; and many others have done the same.

Father Paul Segneri, the younger, a celebrated missionary, in every mission in which he was engaged, preached a sermon on devotion to Mary, and this he called his

favorite sermon. The Redemptorist Fathers also have an invariable rule not to omit in their missions the sermon on Our Lady; and it is found that no discourse is so profitable to the people, or excites more compunction among them, than that on the power and mercy of Mary. To try to make the people good without inspiring them with love for the Blessed Virgin is to labor in vain. The better the people are made to understand what God has given us in Mary, the sooner they will lay aside their evil habits and practise virtue; for no sooner do they commence to love Mary, and pray to her than they open their hearts to the largest channel of grace.

In the year 1835, the communions in a certain parish in the city of Paris, containing a population of twenty-seven thousand, did not exceed seven hundred. The good parish priest set to work to remedy this deplorable state of things; he formally placed the charge committed to him under the protection of Mary, and instituted her confraternity among his people. In the year 1837, the communions amounted to nine thousand five hundred; and each succeeding year they have become more numerous.

Of all the sinners who, by favor of Our Lady, attained to an extraordinary degree of perfection, there was probably none more privileged than St. Mary of Egypt. It was through her devotion to Our Lady that she began, continued, and brought to a happy end, the career of her perfection, and emerged from the abyss of degradation in which she lay to the sublimest heights of sanctity. Before her conversion, she was a snare which entrapped every heart to enslave it to sin and to the devil; a net of which the devil made use to capture souls and to people hell. When the abbot St. Zosimus found her in the wilderness

of Egypt, he requested her to give him an account of her life. This she gave in the following words :

“I ought to die with confusion and shame in telling you what I am ; so horrible is the very mention of it that you will fly from me as from a serpent ; your ears will not be able to bear the recital of the crimes of which I have been guilty. I will, however, relate to you my ignominy, begging of you to pray for me, that God may show me mercy in the day of his terrible judgment. My country is Egypt. When my father and mother were still living, I went, without their consent, to Alexandria. I was then twelve years old. I cannot think, without trembling, on the first steps by which I fell into sin, nor on my disorders which followed.” She then described how she lived a public prostitute seventeen years, not for interest, but to gratify an unbridled lust ; she added : “I continued my wicked course till the twenty-ninth year of my age, when, perceiving several persons making towards the sea, I enquired whither they were going, and I was told they were about to embark for the Holy Land, to celebrate, at Jerusalem, the feast of the Exaltation of the glorious Cross of our Saviour. I embarked with them, looking only for fresh opportunities to continue my debauches, which I repeated both during the voyage and after my arrival at Jerusalem. On the day appointed for the festival, all going to church, I mixed with the crowd to get into the church where the holy cross was shown and exposed to the veneration of the faithful, but found myself withheld from entering the place by some secret but invisible force. This happening to me three or four times, I retired into a corner of the court, and began to consider with myself what this might proceed from, and, seriously reflecting

that my criminal life might be the cause, I melted into tears. Beating, therefore, my sinful breast, with sighs and groans, I perceived above me a picture of the Mother of God. Fixing my eyes upon it, I addressed myself to that Holy Virgin, begging of her, by her incomparable purity, to succor me, defiled with such a load of abominations, and to render my repentance the more acceptable to God. I besought her that I might be suffered to enter the church doors to behold the sacred wood of my redemption; promising from that moment to consecrate myself to God by a life of penance, taking her for my surety in this change of my heart. After this ardent prayer, I perceived in my soul a secret consolation under my grief; and attempting again to enter the church, I went up with ease into the middle of it, and had the comfort to venerate the precious wood of the glorious cross which brings life to man. Considering, therefore, the incomprehensible mercy of God, and his readiness to receive sinners to repentance, I cast myself on the ground, and, after having kissed the pavement, with tears, I arose and went to the picture of the Mother of God, whom I had made the witness and surety of my engagements and resolutions. Falling there on my knees before the image, I addressed my prayers to her, begging her intercession, and that she would be my guide. After my prayer I seemed to hear this voice: 'If thou goest beyond the Jordan, thou shalt there find rest and comfort.' Then, weeping and looking on the image, I begged of the holy Queen of the world that she would never abandon me. After these words I went out in haste, bought three loaves, and, asking the baker which was the gate of the city which led to the Jordan, I immediately took that road, and walked all the rest of the

day, and at night arrived at the church of St. John Baptist, on the banks of the river. There I paid my devotions to God, and received the precious Body of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Having eaten the one-half of one of my loaves, I slept all night on the ground. Next morning, recommending myself to the Holy Virgin, I passed the Jordan, and from that time I have carefully shunned the meeting of any human creature."

Zosimus asked how long she had lived in that desert. "It is," said she, "as near as I can judge, forty-seven years." "And what have you lived upon all that time?" asked Zosimus. "The loaves I took with me," answered she, "lasted me some time; since that I have had no other food than what this wild and uncultivated solitude afforded me. My clothes being worn out, I suffered severely from the heat and cold." "And have you passed so many years," said the holy man, "without suffering much in your soul?" She answered: "Your question makes me tremble by the very remembrance of my past dangers and conflicts, through the perverseness of my heart. Seventeen years I passed in most violent temptations and almost perpetual conflicts with my inordinate desires. I was tempted to regret the flesh and fish of Egypt, and the wines which I drank in the world to excess; whereas here I often could not have a drop of water to quench my thirst. Other desires made assaults on my mind; but, weeping and striking my breast on these occasions, I called to mind the vows I had made under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and begged her to obtain my deliverance from the affliction and danger of such thoughts. After long weeping, and bruising my body with blows, I found myself suddenly enlightened and my mind restored to a

perfect calm. Often the tyranny of my old passions seemed ready to drag me out of my desert ; at those times I threw myself on the ground and watered it with my tears, raising my heart continually to the Blessed Virgin till she procured me comfort ; and she has never failed to show herself my faithful protectress." Zosimus taking notice that in her discourse with him she from time to time made use of Scripture phrases, asked her if she had ever applied herself to the study of the sacred books. Her answer was that she could not even read ; neither had she conversed nor seen any human creature since she came into the desert till that day, that could teach her to read the Holy Scripture or read it to her ; but "it is God," said she, "that teaches man knowledge. Thus have I given you a full account of myself ; keep what I have told you as an inviolable secret during my life, and allow me, the most miserable of sinners, a share in your prayers."

We can say that in the penitential life led by this saint in this solitude she had no other teacher, no other guide, than the all-holy, all-merciful Virgin, to whom she ever had recourse ; it was under Mary's guidance, that she overcame the most fearful temptations and withstood the most violent assaults that hell could make against her ; faith in Mary triumphed over all feeling of weariness, trampled under foot the repugnance of poor, weak nature, and enabled her to persevere constantly for forty-seven years, leaving to the world an ideal of perfect penance, a pattern of the most eminent sanctity, and a most convincing proof that there is no means more powerful than devotion to Mary to raise up any soul, however fallen and weighed down by sin, to the height of perfection.

A great power is evidently within our reach, placed by

the care of God at our disposal, to assist us in our struggles against sin, to raise us when we fall, to carry us on to eminent perfection. It is easy of access; it lies at our door; it is within the instantaneous reach of all, even of children. That power is the influence of Mary, and its employment in the work of our salvation. We may not reject its powerful assistance; nothing can be safely neglected that God has designed to make so perilous a work more sure. We may not throw away the aid thus offered, nor think to fight our way through the ranks of our spiritual foes without obligations to her, nor to speed on in our heavenward course without her helping hand. The heat of the battle will overcome us, the length of the way will exhaust us, unless she buoy up our steps and refresh us when we are weary. God's grace is free and strong; but if she is the channel through which it must flow, it will not reach us but through her. We are not greater than Jesus, yet he made himself her debtor; we are not stronger than he, and yet she was appointed to minister to his infantine weakness. Even if we could struggle through without her support, we should be outstripped in our course by many who started later and with many more disadvantages; our passage would be joyless; hope would shine dimly on the future.

What knowledge have we of the assaults of our spiritual enemies that may lie before us, perhaps in the hour of death? What security have we that if Mary does not assist us then, we shall not be lost? It is for this reason that devotion to Mary is declared by eminent theologians to be a great sign of predestination, on account of the manifold assistance which is thus secured in its attainment.

In the *Chronicles of the Friars' Minor*, (Lib. iv., cap. xxii.) we read that Brother Leo, a familiar companion of St. Francis, had the following vision: The servant of God beheld himself placed on a sudden in the middle of a vast plain. There he beheld the judgment of Almighty God. Angels were flying to and fro, sounding their trumpets and gathering together countless multitudes of people. On this vast field he saw two high ladders, the one white, the other red, which reached from earth to the skies. At the top of the red ladder stood Jesus Christ, with a countenance full of just indignation. On one of the steps, somewhat lower, stood the holy patriarch St. Francis, who cried aloud to his brethren on the plain below: "Come hither, brethren; come without fear; hasten to Christ, who is calling you." Encouraged by these words of their holy father, the religious crowded around the foot of the ladder, and began to mount. Some reached the third step, and others the tenth; some advanced to the middle; but all sooner or later lost their footing and fell wretchedly to the ground. St. Francis, beholding so deplorable a fall, turned to our Lord and earnestly besought him to grant salvation to his children. But the Redeemer yielded not to the prayers of the saint. Then the holy patriarch went down to the bottom of the ladder, and said with great fervor, "Do not despair, brethren of mine; run to the white ladder, and mount it with great courage. Fear not; by it you will enter into Paradise." Whilst he was thus speaking, the Blessed Virgin appeared at the top of the white ladder, crowned with glory and beaming with gentleness. And the friars, mounting the ladder by favor of Mary, made their way, and all happily entered into the glories of Paradise.

We may learn from this how true is the sentiment of St. Ignatius the Martyr, "That the mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary saves those whom God's justice does not save." Ah! let us hearken to the words of this saint; let us hearken to our Lord while he says to us from his throne in heaven: "I am the eternal Wisdom. I have come upon earth only through Mary; through her I have effected the redemption of mankind. If thou desirest wisdom and sanctity, call on Mary; for through her I will give it to thee." It was through her that Rupert the abbot, Albert the Great, Hermanus Contractus, and many others, destitute of learning and talents, became doctors in philosophy, theology, Holy Scripture, and other branches of science.

"Thou art my child; I, therefore, am thy Father, but Mary is thy Mother. Thou art weak; I am the Lord, that giveth strength and help in all thy necessities. Thou art a sinful man, but I am thy God, full of love and mercy; Mary is the refuge of sinners, through whose mediation thou wilt obtain mercy. Thou aspirest after heaven; behold, I am the King of Heaven. Mary is the Queen of Heaven. In order to obtain for thee access to this heavenly kingdom, thou art bound to become holy. I am the living fountain of all grace and holiness; but it is Mary who has the office of dispensing my graces. If thou, then, my child, desirest to obtain graces and glory in heaven, what hast thou to do? Call on Mary. Love and honor Mary. Through her I will listen to thy prayers and give ear to thy sighs. I will show her that I am her Son; and she will show thee that she is thy Mother. My Mother is the gate of heaven; through her all gifts and graces descend on earth; through her all the saints ascend to me into heaven.

“Accomplish, then, my will, by endeavoring with all thy power to promote the honor of my Mother. Extol her at all times and in all places, in season and out of season; wherever thou art, praise and extol her, and cause others to do the same. Impossible for thee to give my Mother more honor, interior and exterior, than is her due. What is thy feeble love and honor compared to that which she receives from me? As thy love for thy fellow-men is but a shadow of my love for men, so thy special love for Mary is but a shadow, a faint, attenuated shadow, of my love for her; for my sake, if thou wouldst please me, reverence her as much as thou canst. If thou hast hitherto served Mary, try to serve her still more fervently; if thou hast loved her, endeavor to love her still more ardently. Happy that Christian who serves Mary and at the same time tries to make others serve her! Happy that Christian family in which Mary is truly honored; I will give it salvation and benediction. I will give it grace in the present life and glory in the life to come.”

WHAT THE ANGELS AND SAINTS KNOW AND SEE.

After all we have said about the veneration and invocation of the saints, the question may be asked: what do the angels and saints know and see?

The angels and saints, says St. Thomas Aquinas, know and see God, but they do not know and see all that is in God, they have not a complete knowledge of God. They are finite creatures, and a finite creature can never be endowed with infinite knowledge, and it requires infinite knowledge to know the infinite. Hence, it is God alone who knows and comprehends himself such as he is.

God is an infinite ocean of light. The saints may enter

it, but they can never see its depth and its extent; God is a mirror in which all things are reflected; but the saints cannot see all the images contained in that incomprehensible mirror. However, what the saints know and see of God is sufficient for their eternal happiness and glory, for it satiates all their desires. Seeing God as he is, they know his nature, his divine attributes, and the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

They see clearly all the truths of religion, which were mysteries to them on earth. They now appear to them in the splendor of the beatific vision; "As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God." (Ps., xlvi., 9.)

They see multitudes of saints, know their thoughts, their love, their joy, their glory. They also have knowledge of the state and torments of the damned in hell. "And Abraham said to him," (Dives) "son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (Luke, xvi., 25.)

They see the state and order of the world, all things in the universe, and the good and bad actions of mankind.

It is also part of their happiness to know for certain that they cannot sin any more and lose the happiness of heaven. It is something peculiar to man not to desire anything, or to make efforts to obtain something, unless he sees some real or supposed good or happiness in the acquisition of that thing. If it happens that he turns his mind and heart from real happiness, it is because he is seduced by some false good or happiness.

The case of the angels and saints is quite different. They see the Divine Essence in all its splendor and glory.

They incessantly contemplate the Sovereign Good, and the universal source of happiness for all created beings. Where could they find something more attractive than God, or how could they choose sin in preference to that divine glory? It is as impossible for them to separate themselves from God as it is for us to deny the first principles of right and wrong.

It is true, they have free will—perfect liberty. But in what does it consist? It consists in being able to choose between doing and not doing a thing; it does not consist in being able to commit sin. It is only by an abuse of liberty that we commit sin. The perfection of liberty or free will consists in acting without fear of sinning, as the perfection of the intellect consists in not erring in the conclusions we draw from the first principles. If then the angels and saints in the state of heavenly glory cannot sin, whilst man unfortunately has the power of sinning, what conclusion can we draw therefrom? It is that liberty or free will is more perfect in the inhabitants of heaven than in us poor mortals of this world, a liberty so great and perfect that they can never abuse it, and consequently are perfectly certain that they can never forfeit their heavenly happiness.

The angels and saints, however, do not know the thoughts of the human heart. The thought of the mind and the disposition of the heart can be known in their effects, or even by the sensations of the soul. The change of countenance, the alteration of the voice, or some other external sign, are sufficient indications of our interior feelings. By such external signs, the angel, and even the devil, can know our thoughts and natural propensities. But they cannot know the thoughts of our intellect nor

the affections of our will. God alone knows them. They know however the prayers addressed to them by the faithful on earth. It is not of great importance to Catholics to know how the saints in heaven know the prayers and necessities of those who, in prayer, address themselves to them. For their part, they do not doubt in the least, that God never wants means of letting the saints know the desires of those who beg their intercession here on earth. God acquainted the prophets with the knowledge of things that were yet to come many hundred years after; he informed the prophet Eliseus of the king of Syria's counsels, though privately resolved on in his bed-chamber, and at a distance. (IV. Kings, vi., 12.) St. Peter knew the sacrilegious lie of Ananias and Saphira.

It is generally granted that even the very devils hear those desperate wretches who call on them? Why should not the saints have this privilege. It is, indeed, an undeniable truth that God has granted thousands of extraordinary favors, at the intercession of his saints when they were invoked by the faithful. These favors are so many evident proofs that the saints know the prayers which are addressed to them.

It is also part of the happiness of the saints to remember all those who were dear to them in this life.

The land in which the saints dwell, is not a land of oblivion. Heaven does not harden hearts, but makes them more tender and more compassionate, it does not distract minds or alienate them; it does not diminish, but increase their affection, charity, and piety for us. How could those forget us who were once among us, and suffered what they see us suffer. No; the just in heaven are most desirous to see us happy with them for all eternity.

They are not so immersed in heavenly glory as to forget our miseries. They are the great friends of God, and they know perfectly well what power they have with God to aid us, by their prayers, in all our necessities. And, Ah! how quick are not the angels and saints in coming to our assistance. Their will alone is sufficient to bring them down from heaven to earth as quick as thought; for there is a double impulse in this movement, that of the divine will, and their own desire to assist us.

When I had charge of our students and novices at Annapolis, Md., I one day went out with them in our boat on the Severn river. We were sailing behind a sand-boat, and whenever she made a tack we also made one. Now, it happened that, after she had made a tack she turned unexpectedly around. We were in her way and in imminent danger of being run over and swamped by her. We were so close to her that some of the students, to escape the danger, leaped from our boat on board the sand-boat. When I saw that the danger of being swamped was inevitable I called on the Blessed Virgin Mary, exclaiming in a loud voice: "Mary, help us!" No sooner had I uttered this cry for supernatural aid than we were instantly out of all danger. On beholding this, the captain of the sand-boat exclaimed: "That's a miraculous escape!"

ON THE HONOR GIVEN TO THE CROSS AND HOLY IMAGES.

29. Of what use are the cross, and holy images?

They remind us of Christ and the saints, increase our devotion, and serve as books of devotion to those who cannot read.

By holy images we mean representations of Christ and

his saints, or of the historical parts of Holy Scripture, showing in a striking manner what Jesus Christ or his faithful servants have done or suffered.

Our divine Saviour is generally represented attached to the cross, or sitting with his disciples at the Last Supper.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is usually represented bearing the holy Infant Jesus in her arms, or crushing the serpent's head under her feet.

The saints are generally represented with circles of light about the head and a diadem surrounding the brow. We often see something peculiar added to the saint—something that serves to recall to our mind the virtues practised by the saint, or the kind of death which he underwent. Thus, St. Lawrence is represented with a gridiron, to remind us of the nature of his martyrdom; and St. Sebastian with arrows fixed in his breast, because he was put to death by arrows which were shot at him.

Before the coming of Christ, the cross was looked upon as a sign of ignominy and disgrace. The deepest shade of infamy was cast upon the character of him who suffered death upon the cross. All looked upon the cross with the greatest horror. But when our dear Saviour came into this world, he chose the cross as the instrument of our redemption. By his death thereon he atoned for our sins, and purchased for us grace and everlasting glory. He made the cross the glorious instrument of his victory and triumph over the devil and sin; he made it his holy standard under which all his followers should fight his battles; and this standard will be borne before our Lord in a triumphant manner, when he shall come in glory to judge the world. (Matt., xxiv., 30.)

Hence it is, that this glorious instrument of our redemption was always very dear and most precious to the holy Apostles of Jesus Christ. "God forbid," exclaims St. Paul, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal., vi., 14.) "Now, no one glories in a thing," says St. Thomas, "unless he loves and esteems it, and places in it all his greatness and happiness." As the sacred Passion of our Lord is the source of all greatness and happiness, the holy Apostles had no other desire than that of improving themselves daily in the knowledge and science of Jesus crucified; they had no other solicitude than that of teaching all men the great mystery of the cross, and of impressing them with the sentiments of Jesus Christ crucified. "I judged not myself," says St. Paul, "to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (I. Cor., ii., 2.) Ah! "Look on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy proposed unto him, underwent the cross, despising the shame. . . . Think diligently upon him who endureth such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." (Heb., xiii., 2, 3.)

It is thus that the Apostles encouraged the Christians to love and esteem the cross. Hence it was, from the very birth of Christianity, a pious custom with the faithful, not only to make the sign of the cross upon their foreheads, but also to impress the same holy emblem upon the walls of their places of religious worship, in the cemeteries, upon their altars, and upon the tombs of their martyred brethren.

It was, also, customary with them to wear about their persons crosses made of gold, or silver, or wood. This we learn from the incident which led to the martyrdom

of St. Orestes, a soldier in the Roman legions, during the reign of Diocletian. Orestes was distinguished in his cohort for his agility in every martial exercise; and, in particular, for the precision with which he cast the disk. Once, as he was displaying his activity in presence of his commander Lysias, a cross, which the Christian soldier wore around his neck, accidentally escaped from between the folds of his garment, where it lay concealed, and proclaimed the religion of Orestes, whose resolute refusal to sacrifice in honor of the gods was crowned with martyrdom.

It was, however, only some years after the promulgation of the Gospel, that they ventured to exhibit the crucifix, that is, the figure of Christ suspended on the cross. They knew that Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles. Hence the Christians of the first centuries refrained from painting the figure of our Blessed Redeemer on the cross.

But the time came when Christ was pleased to make Constantine the great triumph by the sacred sign of the cross, to put a stop to the long persecution of the Christians, and to establish the Catholic religion throughout his dominions. This emperor marched from the border of the Rhine, through Gaul and part of Italy, by Verona to Rome, against his enemy, the tyrant Maxentius. Constantine, though not as yet a Christian, earnestly invoked the one true God, both on his march and especially on the day before he gave battle. Christ was pleased to show him, in two visions, from what power he received the empire of the world. The fact is minutely related by Eusebius who heard it from Constantine himself. Having passed the Alps and reached the plains of Italy, behold,

as he was marching on, a little after midday, at the head of his troops, a luminous cross appeared in the open sky, above the sun, and upon the cross a legend expressing victory was distinctly seen by all, written in Greek characters: "In this be thou conqueror." The night following, Christ appeared to Constantine in his sleep, with the same sign of the cross, commanding him to make a representation of it and use it as his standard in battle. Next morning the emperor arose very early, imparted this second vision to his friends, and gave orders for an exact representation of the cross, as it appeared in the sky, to be made and blazoned in the imperial banner. It was known by the name of *Labarum*. The emperor chose fifty men of the stoutest and most religious among his guards to carry this banner by turns before him whenever he went to battle. Constantine ordered also banners of the same fashion, but of a smaller size, to be made for every legion, and had the monogram of the name of Christ framed, in the form of a cross, on his helmet and in the shields of his soldiers.

Maxentius' army, which consisted of the united forces of three armies of veteran soldiers, esteemed as the best in the empire, engaged Constantine in the Quintian fields, near the bridge Milvius, now called Ponte-Mole. Maxentius was defeated, and drowned in the Tiber, A. D. 312. Constantine entered Rome in triumph on the same day (Oct. 27). He attributed his victory to the cross. Out of religious respect for the sacred instrument of the death of Christ, he forbade the use of the cross as an instrument of punishment of malefactors in any part of his dominions.

In the year 326 St. Helena, the emperor's mother, out

of a desire to visit the holy places in Jerusalem, undertook a journey to Palestine. On her arrival at Jerusalem she felt inspired with a great desire to find the identical cross on which Christ had suffered for our sins. But there was no mark or tradition, even amongst the Christians, where it lay. The heathens, out of their great hatred of Christianity, had done everything in their power to conceal the place where our Saviour was buried. They had heaped upon it a great quantity of stones and rubbish, and they also built over it a temple to Venus, that those who came thither to adore him might seem to pay their worship to a marble idol representing this false deity. They had, moreover, erected a statue of Jupiter in the place where our Saviour rose from the dead. Helena being willing to spare no pains to compass her pious design, consulted all the people at and near Jerusalem, whom she thought likely to give any assistance in finding out the cross. She was informed, that if she could find out the sepulchre, she would likewise find the instruments of torture; it being always the custom among the Jews to make a great hole near the place where the body of the criminal was buried, and to throw into it whatever belonged to his execution. The pious empress therefore ordered the profane buildings to be pulled down, the statues to be broken in pieces, and the rubbish to be removed. The excavation having been made to a considerable depth, the holy sepulchre was discovered, and near it were extended three crosses, and there also lay the nails which had pierced our Saviour's body, and the title which had been fixed to the cross. That one of these crosses was the one they were in quest of there appeared no reason to doubt; but which of the three it was could

not be ascertained, as the title was found separate from the cross. In this perplexity the holy Bishop Macarius, knowing that one of the principal ladies of the city lay extremely ill, suggested to the empress to cause the three crosses to be carried to the sick person, not doubting but God would discover which was the cross they sought for. This being done, St. Macarius prayed that God would have regard to their faith, and after his prayer, applied the crosses singly to the patient, who was immediately and perfectly recovered by the touch of one of the three crosses, the other two having been tried without effect. St. Helena, full of joy for having found the treasure for which she had so earnestly sought, built a church on the spot, and placed it in that church with great veneration, having provided an extraordinary rich case for it. She afterwards carried part of it to the Emperor Constantine, then at Constantinople; another part she carried to Rome, to be placed in the church which she built there, called the Holy Cross of Jerusalem. The main part of the cross St. Helena enclosed in a silver shrine, and committed it to the care of St. Macarius. St. Paulinus relates, that although chips were almost daily cut off from it and given to the devout, yet the sacred wood was not thereby diminished. It is affirmed by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, twenty-five years after the discovery, that pieces of the cross were spread all over the earth. He compared this wonder to the miraculous feeding of five thousand men, as recorded in the Gospel.—*Alban Butler.*

From the time that Constantine the Great had gained his great victory over Maxentius by the miraculous power of the cross, this sacred sign was held in great public veneration all over his dominions. But the cross

of our Lord is "*a sign which shall be contradicted*" to the end of the world.

It was not many years after when the emperor Julian, the apostate, persecuted the Christians in a most cruel manner. He hated Christ, and did all in his power to bring infamy upon our Redeemer and his holy religion. Being a great enemy of the cross of Christ, he ordered this sacred sign to be taken out of the shields of the soldiers.

To strengthen and confirm the Christians in their love and veneration of the cross, our dear Saviour was pleased about that time to honor the instrument of his Passion by a great miracle. On the seventh day of May, about nine o'clock in the morning, there appeared a large body of light, in the form of a cross, in the heavens, just over the holy Mount Golgatha, reaching as far as the holy Mount Olivet (that is, almost two English miles in length.) This luminous body was seen clearly not only by one or two persons, but by the whole City of Jerusalem. This most wonderful apparition was not a momentary transient phenomenon; for it lasted for several hours together, visible to all; it was brighter than the sun, for the light of the sun could not eclipse it. The whole city was struck with reverential awe and fear, tempered with joy. All ran immediately to the Church, young and old, Christians and heathens, citizens and strangers; they all united in giving praise to our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, the worker of miracles, and acknowledged the truth of the Christian religion to which the heavens bore witness. The Greek church commemorates this miracle on the 7th of May. (*A. Butler's Lives of the Saints, March 18.*)

As Christ himself has rendered his cross most glorious; as he has triumphed, by this sign, over all his enemies;

as he has chosen the cross to be his standard, under which all his followers are to fight his battles and gain the victory over their enemies, the Church of Christ has always professed a very high regard and veneration for this salutary sign.

One day Monsignor de Cheverus preached on the adoration of the cross. Many Protestants were present. First he laid it down as the true doctrine of the Church, that we adore only Jesus Christ, the Man-God; and that the honor we pay the cross is to be referred to Jesus Christ, who is represented on the cross as dying for us. He then went on in these words: "Suppose that some man, with a generous and magnanimous soul, seeing one of you about to fall under the sword of an enemy, casts himself at once between you and the assassin, and by his own death saves your life; and that an artist struck with surprise at such an heroic act, draws the portrait of that noble and generous spirit, and presents you with the picture representing him bathed in his blood and covered with wounds—what should your first impulse be on receiving it? Why, you would at once fall on your knees with love and gratitude, passionately kiss it, and moisten it with your tears. But, my brethren, this just explains the doctrine of the Church in reference to the adoration of the cross. When we now look on the cross, and the figure on that cross, the mind discusses not, but the heart is full of love and gratitude, and cannot restrain its warm bursts of affection and tenderness." At these words the entire audience became affected, the preacher took up the crucifix, and the Protestants, forgetting their dry controversy, approached the cross, and with tearful eyes kissed it lovingly.

If we, then, kneel down and pray before the cross, the crucifix, the images or relics of Christ, it is not that we pray to the cross, or crucifix, or the images, or relics of Christ and his saints, for we know but too well that these objects are lifeless, senseless, and powerless, and can neither hear nor help any one.

One day a Protestant lady entered a Catholic Church, and saw her Catholic lady-friend kneel down and pray before each station of the way of the cross. She went and said to her: "How foolish you are to pray to a lifeless and senseless, and powerless picture! Is this not the sin of idolatry?" The Catholic lady answered; "Did you hear what I said when kneeling down to pray before the image of our Lord? I did not say, 'I adore thee, O image of Christ and bless thee;' but I said, 'I adore thee, O Christ and bless thee, because, by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.'" The Protestant lady was silent and ashamed of her ignorance.

The reason, then, why we kneel down and pray before the images and relics of Christ or his saints, is, because these pious objects enliven our devotion by exciting pious affections and desires in our hearts, and because, by reminding us of Christ and his saints, they encourage us to imitate their virtues and good works.

Chr. Fr. D. Schubart, a Protestant, relates the following touching anecdote: "I saw a Franciscan kneeling before a fresco painting of Christ on the walls of the cloister, which was admirable for its truth and beauty of expression. On hearing me approach, he rose up. 'Father that is really beautiful.' 'Yes; but the original is still more so,' said the monk, smiling. 'Then why make use of a material image in prayer?' 'I see,' said he, 'that

you are a Protestant; but do you not see that the artist modulates and ennobles the fantasies of my own imagination; have you not always experienced that this faculty calls up a thousand different forms? Permit me to prefer, when there is question of images, the work of a great master to the creation of my own fancy.' I was silent," concludes the writer.

No doubt, those who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ, love everything that refers to him and reminds them of him. Hence they love his cross, they love his images, and appreciate them higher than others. "It is," says St. Teresa, "a great consolation to see the pictures of our amiable Saviour. I wish our eyes could always be fixed upon them." Indeed, can there be anything more attractive and interesting for a Christian than to gaze on the image of him who has loved us with an infinite love?

Hence, the holy Council of Trent says, on this subject: "And the bishop shall carefully teach this, that by means of the histories of the mysteries of our redemption, portrayed by paintings or other representations, the people are instructed and confirmed in (the habit of) remembering, and continually revolving in mind the articles of faith, as also that great profit is derived from all sacred images, not only because the people are thereby admonished of the benefits and gifts bestowed upon them by Christ, but also because the miracles which God has performed by means of the saints, and their salutary examples, are set before the eyes of the faithful, that so they may give God thanks for those things, may order their own lives and manners in imitation of the saints, and may be excited to adore and love God, and to cultivate piety." (*Sess. 25.*)

The crucifix and the images of the saints are, then, in

the first place, like so many books which are suited to those who cannot read; for from them can be learned the history of religion and the principal mysteries. "Sacred pictures are books for the unlearned," says St. Gregory the Great; "we place them in the churches, that those who cannot read may behold on the walls that which they cannot learn from books." (*Apud. Guillon, t. xxiv.*) "Sacred pictures and images," says the learned and pious Bishop of Belley, "serve the purposes of books to the more instructed, as well as to the least, because they are calculated to excite in the minds of all sentiments of true piety and of holy emulation."

In the second place, they excite in us pious affections and desires toward Jesus Christ, his blessed Mother, and the saints. People of the world procure the pictures of the persons whom they love, that the love and affection which they bear them may be nourished. And pious souls wish that there should be placed before their eyes the crucifix and the pictures of the saints, that the love which they bear God and the saints may always be kept alive; for nothing is better calculated to excite that love than the crucifix and the images and relics of the saints. Let us suppose a succession of holy pictures suspended from the walls of a Church or room, representing Jesus Christ born in a stable—adored by the Magi—presented to his Father in the temple of Jerusalem—conducted into Egypt by St. Joseph—fasting in the desert—preaching to the multitude—healing the sick—raising the dead—transfigured on the mountain—at the Last Supper with his Apostles—washing their feet, and instituting the blessed Eucharist—agonizing in the garden of Gethsemane—betrayed by Judas—brought before the different tribunals—

tied to a pillar and scourged naked—condemned to death by Pilate—carrying His cross up Calvary's hill—crucified between two thieves—buried in the tomb—arising gloriously from the dead—appearing to his disciples after his resurrection, and ascending into heaven—what a great many truths will be learned from so many pious pictures ! Must not such representations *excite* in the hearts of all who look at and contemplate them, “pious affections and desires” towards God our Redeemer, who has done and suffered so much for our salvation.

If we suppose another line of pious images representing the acts of virtues practised by the saints—St. Peter bitterly weeping for having denied Christ—St. Stephen falling on his knees when he was about to be stoned, to ask pardon for his executioners—St. Lawrence suffering on a gridiron for his faith, and so of many others ; what effect must the view of them have on the minds of Christians ! Will they not at once admire the wonderful effects of grace, and will they not feel themselves *excited* to practise virtue, and to do everything in their power to imitate these great models of sanctity ?

In the third place, the crucifix, holy pictures, and relics encourage us to imitate the virtues and good works of Christ and the saints ; for, when we look on them, we immediately recall to our minds the life and actions of Jesus Christ and the saints. We begin to reflect on the great love and kindness of Jesus Christ towards us, on his goodness and patience, his charity and his humility ; we also ponder on the virtues of the saints, their purity, their zeal, their disinterestedness, their submission under all trials and sufferings to the will of God ; and thus, meditating on the acts of those illustrious friends of Jesus

Christ, we are induced to imitate their virtues and good works.

St. Teresa tells us, in the nineteenth book of her life, that her resolution to lead a holy life was owing to the sight of an image of Jesus suffering on the cross. "One day on entering my oratory," she writes, "I saw an image representing Jesus covered with wounds. It was so touching, it reminded me, in so lively a manner, of all that Jesus had suffered for us, that I was entirely overwhelmed by the sight thereof. On beholding those wounds which my sins had greatly enlarged, I was seized with a death-like suffering. My heart seemed to break. I knelt down at the feet of my Jesus, and with many tears, entreated him to give me the grace never to offend him again.

"From that moment I have always felt a great love for pious pictures. Alas! how unhappy are not those heretics who regard them as objects of horror, and who, through their own fault, are deprived of a great means of instruction and edification. Undoubtedly, they do not love Jesus Christ. If they loved him, they could not help taking pleasure in contemplating his features. Do not those who love one another, in this world, take pleasure in gazing on the portrait of the beloved one?"

Sylvester relates that St. Mary Magdalene revealed to a great servant of God of the Dominican Order, that, after the Ascension of our Lord, she felt inspired to retire into the wilderness, there to lead a life of prayer and penance. From the very beginning of her retired life, she besought God most earnestly to make that exercise of piety known to her, by which she would become most pleasing to him. God heard her prayer. He sent an

angel to plant a cross at the entrance of the cave in which she lived for thirty-two years, and thus gave her to understand that, by remembering all the sufferings which Jesus Christ had undergone out of love for her, and by meditating upon them every day of her life, she would become most pleasing to him, for the very reason that no one can reflect long upon the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ, upon his death on the cross, and upon the love with which he died for all men, without feeling inflamed with love for him who endured so much for love of us.

Blosius relates that God one day revealed to St. Gertrude, that one draws upon himself the eyes of the divine mercy as often as he looks devoutly at an image of Jesus Christ crucified. Indeed, the constant meditation on the sufferings of Christ on the cross, is the great school of Christian perfection. All the saints found in it their comfort and their joy; they learned in it to die to themselves, and to enter into the sentiments of Christ crucified.

Where did St. Bernard acquire his eminent spirit of devotion? Where did the great St. Augustine obtain his spiritual science? Where did St. Francis of Assisium conceive his seraphic love? Where did St. Thomas Aquinas learn his sacred science? It was in the meditation on Jesus Christ crucified, in the book of the crucifix. "When St. Bonaventure writes the spiritual breathings of his heart, all inflamed with love," says St. Francis de Sales, "he seems to have no other paper than the cross, no other pen than the lance, no other ink than the precious blood of Christ. What a deep sentiment of love when he exclaims: It is good for us always to abide in spirit before the cross! Let us make to ourselves three tabernacles in the wounds of our crucified Redeemer; one in

his feet, another in his hands, and a third in his sacred side. Here will I rest; here will I watch; here will I read; here will I converse; here will I study."

The holy Catholic Church, therefore, was right when she solemnly declared in the General Council of Trent, "that the images of Christ, of the Virgin mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained, especially in Churches, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them; not in such a manner, however, as if any divinity or virtue was in them, or as if anything was to be asked of them, or as if any trust was to be placed in them, as was of old done by the heathens, who placed their hope in idols; no, the honor shown to images refers to those who are represented by them—that is, Jesus Christ, or his saints. So that, if we kiss an image, or uncover the head, or prostrate ourselves before it, we adore Christ by this outward act of respect, or venerate the saint whom it represents." (*Sess. xxv.*)

This doctrine of the veneration of holy images has always been taught by the holy Catholic Church. In the eighth century, certain heretics arose, called Iconoclasts (breakers of images), who rejected the reverence due to the cross and holy images. They broke them into pieces and trampled them under foot. They found a defender of their impious doctrine in Leo, the *Isaurian*, a rude and ignorant soldier, who rose from the humblest walks of life, and finally succeeded, by the aid of his army, in being placed upon the imperial throne. It is told of him that, amid the mountains of Isauria, he once heard some Jews blaspheme and curse an image of the Redeemer. One of them turned to him and jokingly remarked: "Were you emperor, would you not destroy all those images?" "I

swear," replied the boy, "that I should not spare a single one." The imperial crown recalled his oath. In A. D. 726, he published a decree, announcing that in gratitude for the favors heaped upon him by God since his accession, he wished to destroy the *idolatry* which had crept into the Church; that the pictures of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, were idols, to which honor was given that was only due to a zealous God. He accordingly ordered their removal from the churches, oratories and private dwellings, and at length doomed their existence as well as their use.

When the edict was presented for signature to Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, he refused his name. "The Christians do not worship images," said he to the emperor, "but only honor them as memorials of the saints and of their virtues. Painting is but an epitome of history for Christians, not an idolatry. You must distinguish between direct and relative veneration." But Leo was unwilling to understand so clear and simple an explanation. He again ordered St. Germanus to receive his decree, with the alternative of banishment, or even death, in case of refusal. "Remember," said the patriarch, "your coronation oath to change nothing in the tradition of the Church." The emperor struck the venerable confessor and caused his deposition by the senate. Germanus, taking off his pallium, said to the tyrant; "Although I am in the prince's power, yet my faith bows only to the decision of the Church." The intrepid champion of Christ numbered already four-score years. The emperor banished him and gave his See to a priest, named Anastasius, who did not blush to barter his faith for the vain honor of an usurped title. From that hour an un-

paralleled fanaticism wreaked its fury upon every sacred symbol. The troops of the Isurian broke into the churches and private dwellings, destroyed every pious work of art, and murdered all who dared to oppose them. Their profession named the heretics Iconoclasts (breakers of images). The emperor found it profitable to confiscate a number of gold and silver statues, costly vessels used in the service of the altar, jewels which enriched the images of Mary, and destroyed a large brass crucifix with which the piety of Constantine the Great had adorned one of the porticos of the imperial palace. It had always been held in special reverence by the inhabitants of Constantinople. Some women of the lower class rushed upon the officer who had executed the impious order, and murdered him. They had but given the signal for a savage slaughter, and were put to death, with many other Catholics. The martyrs were covered with a coat of pitch, and burned upon a pile of sacred images; their calcined bodies were then thrown to dogs.

A voice, however, from Syria was raised to brand the excesses of this savage cruelty. St. John Damascene proved the lawfulness of venerating images, by Sacred Scripture, Catholic tradition, and sound, logical arguments. "A picture," said he, "is to the ignorant what a book is to the learned. A picture is to the sight, what a word is to the hearing. Holy images are memorials of the divine works. Besides, the decision in such matters falls not within the province of princes, but of the Church. It was not to kings that Jesus Christ gave power to bind and to loose; it was to the apostles and their lawful successors, the bishops and doctors of the Church. Let these rash innovators recall the words of the Apostle St. Paul:

‘Should an angel come down from heaven and preach to you another Gospel than that which you have received We will not finish the text, but leave them time for repentance. But if—what God forbid, they obstinately cling to their error, we may then add the rest: Let him be anathema’” (accursed). This work created a deep sensation in the Catholic world. Leo sought to revenge himself on its author by means of a most infamous calumny. He had him accused as a traitor to the Saracen Caliph Hiokam, and the false charge proved by a forged letter. The Caliph called his council together, and the saint was condemned, and sentenced to have his hand cut off as a traitor. His innocence was, however, miraculously proved. Animated with a lively faith, he went before an image of the Blessed Virgin, whose honor he constantly defended, placed his amputated hand in connexion with the stump of his arm, prayed to the Holy Mother of God that his hand might be again united to his body, in order that he might be enabled to write again in defence of her honor. His prayer was heard. (*Darras' Hist. of the Church, vol. ii. pp. 310-314; Hist. of Heresies by St. Alph. p. 193.*)

By this miracle God confirmed the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the veneration of holy images, and showed how he detested all those who reject this doctrine. These heretics were condemned and excommunicated by the Church in the second Council of Nice.

Among those who, at that time, were famous for defending this holy doctrine of the Catholic Church, and suffering even martyrdom in defence of it, was St. Stephen, abbot of Auxentium. In presence of the emperor Constantine Copronymous, who was an Iconoclast, he drew forth a

coin, on which was stamped the image of the Emperor and his son. "Now," said he, "if I spit on this image and trample it under foot, shall I be punished?" "Certainly," answered the officers of the court; "such an act would be a flagrant insult to the majesty of the emperor; such a crime would be punished with death." "What!" cried the saint, with a burst of indignation, "You put to death him who insults the image of your emperor, and you yourselves insult and trample on the image of Jesus Christ, the 'King of Kings!' Do you suppose, that God will not punish those who insult him in his images?"

This saint, who so strenuously defended the honor of images, was exiled for two years; then brought to Constantinople and put in prison, with chains on his hands, and his feet in the stocks. There he had the happiness to meet three hundred and forty-two monks from different countries—some had their noses cut off; others their eyes plucked out, or their hands or ears cut off; others were covered all over with scars from the floggings they had received, and many were afterwards put to death, and all this because they would not subscribe to the decree against the images. After being detained forty days in prison, a number of the imperial satellites came there one day, furiously calling on the guards to bring out Stephen of Auxentium. The saint came boldly forward and said: "I am he whom you seek." They immediately threw him on the ground, tied a rope to the irons on his legs, and dragged him through the streets, kicking and trampling on his head and body and striking him with clubs and stones all the way. When they had dragged him as far as the Oratory of St. Theodore the martyr, he raised up his head and recommended himself to the intercession

of the martyr. "See," said Philomatus, one of his tormentors, "the scoundrel wishes to die a martyr," and he at once struck him on the head with a heavy club, and killed him. The murderer immediately fell to the ground, the devil entered into him and killed him in a most frightful manner. (*Hist. of Heres. by St. Alph., p. 195.*)

30. But does not God say, "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing?"

God does not forbid the making, but the adoring, of images.

It is not forbidden by the first Commandment to make images, provided they are not made for the purpose of adoration. This is evident from several reasons. If the words taken from the book of Exodus: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath . . . thou shalt not adore them nor serve them," (Exod., xx., 4), were intended to forbid the making of images of any kind, as they include every kind without exception, it would be unlawful to make any picture at all, because all are included, whether holy or profane; so that it would be a sin to make the picture of a friend, or to imprint the king's image upon coin, or to paint a horse, or a house, or any creature whatsoever. But no sane man ever imagined that the command extended to all this, for it would be the greatest folly to suppose that God prohibited the making of images in general. Neither are we prohibited by the first Commandment to make holy images; and for this clear reason, because God Himself absolutely commanded holy images to be made, as He said to Moses: "Thou shalt also make two cherubim of

beaten gold on the two sides of the oracle ; let one cherub be at one side, and the other on the other ; let them cover both sides of the propitiatory, spreading their wings and covering the oracle." (Exod., xxv., 18.) In this passage we see, that holy images, or the likenesses of heavenly things, were made by the express command of God.

In the book of Numbers we find, too, that Moses was commanded by God to make a "brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign ; that whosoever being struck (with the fiery serpents) shall look on it, shall live." (Num., xxi., 8.) This "brazen serpent" was a holy image, representing Christ upon the cross, as he himself assures us in the third chapter of the Gospel of St. John. Now, this is a manifest proof that the words of the first Commandment do not forbid the making of holy images, for if they were forbidden, God would never have commanded them on so many occasions to be made. Neither are we forbidden to use images for religious purposes ; for God not only commanded the images of the two cherubim to be placed upon the mercy-seat, upon the ark of the covenant, which was paying them honor, but he also made use of them for religious purposes ; for he said to Moses : "Thence will I give orders, and will speak to thee over the propitiatory, and from the midst of the two cherubim." (Exod., xxv., 22.)

What is forbidden by the first Commandment is not, therefore, the *making of images*, nor the *honoring of images*, but the making of them for the purpose of adoring and serving them as the idolaters do. That this alone is what is prohibited, is clear from the words of the command. For, after forbidding to make the likeness of anything, &c., it is immediately added : "Thou shalt not adore

them nor serve them," which words go to prove that the command only forbids the making of these things as idols, in order to be adored and served as if they were gods, or as if they had the power to see, hear or help us.

To make images and adore and serve them as gods is the crime of idolatry—a crime that prevailed much when God gave his commands to the Israelites, and to which the Israelites themselves were very prone, as appears from their own history. Idolatry was always severely and signally punished by God, as we learn from the book of Exodus, where there is mention made of twenty-three thousand Israelites being put to the sword by the command of Moses, for their idolatry in worshipping the golden calf.

31. Why do we honor the relics of the saints ?

Because God himself often honors them by miracles, and on the last day will honor them with eternal glory.

A holy relic is anything that belonged to any saint of God, and now remains with us after the saint to whom it belonged has either departed out of this life, or is at a distance from us. Now, the relics of the saints may be divided into three classes. In the first class may be placed the body or any part of the body of a saint which remains with us after his soul has quitted this earth. Thus the head, the arms, the limbs, the feet, the hands, the ears, the mouth, the teeth, the flesh, the hair, are so many relics. In the second class may be placed those things that belonged to the saint in his life-time, such as his books, clothes, or the like, but formed not a part of the saint's body, but only something that belonged to him. These also are esteemed holy, because they had relation

to the saint; such was the rod of Moses, and the mantle of Elias the Prophet. In the third class are included things that did not belong to the saints, but only had touched their bodies, either in their life-time or after their death; such are the aprons and handkerchiefs that touched the body of St. Paul, and afterwards cured all diseases, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

Now the authenticity of such relics must be sufficiently warranted, for to honor relics without a prudent and moral assurance of their authenticity, or without the due authority of pastors, as the canons require, is to fall into superstition.

One day St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, came to a place where he found a chapel and an altar erected by the concession of his predecessors, over the tomb of a pretended martyr. The place was much revered by the people; but St. Martin who was not over-credulous, would not go thither to pray, because he had no reliable account of the relics. He asked the eldest of the clergy what they knew of them, and receiving no satisfactory answer, he went with some of his brethren to the tomb of the pretended martyr, and besought God to show him who was buried there. Then turning to the left, he saw near him a pale ghost, of a fierce aspect, whom he commanded to speak. The ghost told his name; and it appeared that he had been a robber, who was executed for his crimes, whom the people honored as a martyr. None but St. Martin saw him; the others only heard his voice. Thereupon St. Martin caused the altar to be removed, and freed the people from this superstition. (*Sulp. Sev. in Vit. S. Mart. C. 11, p. 310.*) Where, however, the rules of prudence, concerning the authenticity of relics, are

observed, even though a mistake should happen, it is of the same nature as if a person, by inculpable inadvertence, kissed some other book instead of the Bible; and the primary object of such religious actions, which is to glorify God in his saints, is always certain, whatever mistakes may happen in facts, or such like human means which excite our devotion.

The relics included in the first class—the bodies or parts of the bodies of the saints, are properly relics in the strictest sense of the word. We honor them, because they were victims offered up to God either by martyrdom, or by patience.

The council of Trent says: “There is a reverence due to the bodies of holy martyrs and others, who reign with Christ; for these bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost; and they will one day be raised again to life, and glorified by the Lord, and it is through these bodies that God has bestowed many blessings upon men.” (*Sess. 25.*)

In the glorious days of the infant Church, the faithful applied to the sick the handkerchiefs and linens which had touched the body of St. Paul, and the sick were at once cured. But if God could give to mere linens which had touched the body of a saint the virtue of healing diseases, could he not give the same efficacy to the bodies themselves of martyrs and other saints? And not only could he, but he has actually done so. At all times, extraordinary favors have been obtained, and illustrious miracles have been performed by the relics of the saints. The history of the Church and the holy Fathers relate a great number of such miracles, the authenticity of which cannot for a moment be questioned. St. Augustine speaks in one

of his works of the finding of the relics of St. Stephen, and of the miracles which were performed on that occasion, and remarks: "A little dust has gathered together a numerous congregation of people; the ashes are hidden, but the benefits appear. Consider what God reserves in the kingdom of the living, when he gives such blessings from the dust of those that are dead." (*Serm.* 217, or *Dit.* 92.)

In the city of Naples, in Italy, are preserved the relics of the holy Bishop and martyr St. Januarius. Among many miraculous deliverances which this city ascribes to the intercession of this great saint, none is looked upon as more remarkable than its preservation from the fiery eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, now called La Somma, which is only eight miles distant, and which has often threatened the entire destruction of the city, both by the prodigious quantities of burning sand, ashes, and stones which it throws up on those occasions to a much greater distance than Naples, and, by a torrent of burning sulphur, nitre, calcined stones, and other materials, which, like a liquid fire, has sometimes gushed from that volcano, and, digging itself a channel, which was sometimes two or three miles broad, rolled its flaming waves through the valley into the sea, destroying towns and villages in its way and often passing near Naples. Some of these eruptions, which in the fifth and seventh centuries threatened this city with destruction, by the clouds of ashes which they raised, are said to have darkened the sky as far as Constantinople, and struck terror unto the inhabitants of that capital.

On those occasions, the people had recourse to the intercession of St. Januarius, and thereupon the divine mercy so wonderfully interposed in causing these dreadful evils

suddenly to cease, especially in 685, Benedict II. being Pope, and Justinian the younger, emperor, that the Greeks instituted a feast in honor of St. Januarius, with two yearly processions, to return thanks to God.

The protection of Naples from this dreadful volcano by the intercession of the same saint, was most remarkable in 1631 and 1707. In this the last, whilst Cardinal Francis Pignatelli, with the clergy and people, devoutly followed the shrine of St. Januarius in procession to a chapel at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, the fiery eruption ceased, the mist, which before was so thick that no one could see another at the distance of three yards, was scattered, and at night the stars appeared in the sky.

St. Jerome wrote a book against Vigilantius, who was the first to deny honor to holy relics. One passage of the work has these words: "The devils, with which he (Vigilantius) is possessed, roar at the relics, and confess they cannot bear the presence of the martyrs." And in his fifty-third epistle, he writes thus: "You tell me that he (Vigilantius) vomits once more his poison against the relics of martyrs, calling us dust-worshippers and idolaters, for reverencing dead men's bones. Oh! unhappy man, who can never be sufficiently lamented!"

We honor the relics of the martyrs that we may adore him whose martyrs they are; that the honor of the servant may redound to the Master who says: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." (*Lib. contra. Vigil.*)

"Those, therefore," says the Council of Trent, "who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of the saints; or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honored by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited

with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned and now also condemns them." (*Sess. 25.*)

32. Is it allowed to wear relics of the saints, or blessed articles of devotion ?

Yes; provided we place confidence, not in them, but in God, or in the intercession of the saints, or in the blessings of the Church.

When speaking of superstition, we said that it is superstition to believe that those who carry about them the rosary, or scapular, or Agnus Dei, or relics of the saints, or St. John's Gospel, or any such work of piety, shall never be condemned to hell; or that at the hour of death, they shall certainly repent, and have the benefits of the sacraments, although they have neglected to receive them all their lives. Such a presumption of security does not come from God. Hence, the Council of Cambray, held in 1565, admonishes the faithful that "the vanity and superstition of those are abominable, who promise themselves for certain that they shall not depart this life without penance and the reception of the sacraments, because they have a devotion to this or that saint, or because they carry about them certain articles of devotion."

It is, however, without doubt, very lawful to carry relics about us, or a cross, or an Agnus Dei, an image of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or of the saints, or other marks of piety approved by the Church, as the rosary and the scapular, provided it be done with a pious intention, placing our confidence, not in relics, images, or any other article of devotion, but in God, or in the intercession of the saints, or in the blessings and prayers of the Church.

CONCLUSION.

OUR dear Saviour came into this world to save us from everlasting destruction. By his holy doctrine he showed us the true road to heaven. By his death upon the cross, he obtained for us all the graces necessary to enable us to walk on that road. By the worthy reception of the sacraments and by prayer we obtain those graces.

But as it is in the nature of man to act *freely* and tend to happiness, whether real or imaginary, without *compulsion* or *constraint*, our dear Saviour wrought miracles himself, and has, since the establishment of his Church, wrought miracles through his saints, to induce men to seek *freely*, through him, mercy and salvation in the Roman Catholic Church, in which alone miracles are performed. Hence, only those are induced by miracles to embrace the Catholic faith, who *freely* and *earnestly* seek for truth, grace and glory. "Wisdom," says Holy Scripture, "will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a soul subject to sin." (Wisd., i., 4.) I will here relate a miracle which is called, by Baronius, "The *Standing Miracle* in the Catholic Church,"—a miracle by which God most clearly confirms the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the veneration and invocation of the saints, and of the honor paid to holy images and relics.

It is hoped that the reading of this miracle may produce a salutary effect upon those candid non-Catholics who are animated with a sincere heart and upright will.

Now this standing miracle in the Church is that of the blood of St. Januarius, liquifying and boiling up at the approach of the martyr's head.

In a rich chapel, called the Treasury, in the great Church at Naples, are preserved the blood, in two very old glass vials, and the head of St. Januarius. The blood is congealed, and of a dark color, but, when brought in sight of the head, though at a considerable distance, it melts, bubbles up, and, upon the least motion, flows on any side. The fact is attested by Baronius, Ribadeneira, and innumerable other eye-witnesses of all nations and religions.

This miracle takes place equally in all seasons of the year and in variety of circumstances. The usual times when it is performed are the feast of St. Januarius, the 19th of September; that of the translation of his relics, the Sunday which falls next to the calends of May; and the 20th day of December, on which, in 1631, a terrible eruption of Mount Vesuvius was extinguished, upon invoking the patronage of this martyr. The same is done on extraordinary occasions at the discretion of the archbishop. This miracle has regularly happened on the annual feast of St. Januarius, and on that of the translation of his relics, from the time of that translation, about the year 400. Many Protestants, on witnessing this great miracle, have been converted to the Catholic faith. No wonder, for not to believe a doctrine which is confirmed by miracles is to resist obstinately the voice of God who speaks through miracles.

THE END.
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